六畳間の侵略者!?
春夏秋冬
健速
Takehaya

"See you lateeer!"
"Well, see you later."
六畳間の侵略者!?
春夏秋冬

Through the autumn leaves to Kisshou Mountain

What's
your New
Year's wish?

六畳間の侵略者!?

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序章
~Prologue~

六畳間の侵略者!?

Prologue

Satomi Koutarou was extremely bad at getting up in the mornings. Even if he had an important event in the day, that wouldn't change. That's how Koutarou had lived until now, sleeping without regard to the surroundings or issues around him. So the sight of Koutarou and Sanae sleeping together in room 106 was a common one that put those who saw it in a pleasant mood.

"…Hey, Koutarou, wake up."

However, there was an exception to every rule, seeing Koutarou spread-eagled, sleeping without a care was aggravating to someone who was tense in anticipation of an important event. Especially so when Koutarou was central to the event.

"Koutarou! Can't you understand I'm telling you to wake up!? Honestly…"

Theia shook Koutarou, pulling her eyebrows together in annoyance. Today was the day she'd been waiting and waiting for, the performance of the second part of the play. So for Koutarou who was playing one of the main characters, the morning was full of work like having a final check through of the script to avoid forgetting any lines. Despite this, Koutarou was still sleeping together with Sanae, making Theia dissatisfied.

"Why you… Today's the performance, yet you're so carefree… what do I do?"

Theia sat next to the still sleeping Koutarou, crossed her arms and began to think of how to wake him up. If it had have been just after they met, she would have probably used weapons, or trodden on him. It had probably become shaking him with both arms after summer, and in winter, she wanted to see his sleeping face. But she couldn't do that now, she had to wake him up somehow.

"If it's now…"

A scene from a movie she'd once seen came to Theia's mind, a scene full of romance where a character woke their lover with a kiss. Immediately after remembering, the actors in her mind were replaced with her and Koutarou. Theia's cheeks were instantly dyed a deep red and she shook her head back and forth.

"I-I can't do something like that! Wake up already! Wake up!"

To hide her embarrassment after thinking about something so daring, Theia raised her voice and started shaking Koutarou more violently.

"Nn, nnn~~~"

With that, Sanae, who had been sleeping whilst clinging on to Koutarou, let out a small sound. With the spiritual waves flowing over her changing chaotically from a slight anger, to strong affection and then to severe shyness, Sanae had woken up before Koutarou.

"Nnn~~~ Theia? What are you making such a fuss over this morning?"

Sanae yawned several times as she sat up, rubbing at sleep filled eyes, she lifted her gaze sleepily to Theia.

"Ah- n-no, i-it's nothing…"

Theia frantically searched for an excuse, she couldn't say she'd imagined a kiss and gotten embarrassed. Fortunately, she didn't just have an excuse, she had an actual reason.

"T-that's right! It's the performance today, so I wanted to wake Koutarou up! But I really can't, so it irritated me!"

The moment she heard the word performance, Sanae suddenly woke up properly. She had worked hard as support to Koutarou so she was invested in the play. Because of that, her sleepiness vanished in an instant.

“Well, we need to hurry up and wake him up then!”

“R-right, we have a mountain of things to do.”

Rather than being suspicious of Theia, Sanae was an ally, seeing this, Theia let out a sigh of relief.

“What’s up?”

“Nothing. So then, do you have a good way to wake him up?”

“Hmm, well, you know Koutarou, he’s a Japanese man who always keeps his promises.”

Sanae said pridefully, almost like she was talking about herself. Sanae already didn’t see Koutarou as an outsider.

“I know that.”

“So, if I go and tell his mind that it’s time to get up, he’ll get up right away. Wait a minute, I’ll go and do that.”

Sanae hugged Koutarou and closed her eyes. Then, touching spirits with Koutarou, she sent a message to his mind. The wall around his heart would have interfered and made this difficult, but now there was no wall around his heart between him and her. The charm hanging from her neck amplified those bonds too, so simply sending a message was as easy as breathing.

“Ngh~~~ Fuahh…”

Before long had passed, Koutarou stretched out. Feeling Koutarou wake, Sanae released him and spoke to him using her voice.

“Get up Koutarou, today’s the performance.”

“Ah, that’s right, that was today.”

After stretching and yawning, Koutarou, along with Sanae who was on top of him, got up. Sanae had been kneeling on his chest, still in the same position, she was now at eye level with Theia and flashed a prideful smile and victory sign at her.

“Mission complete♪”

“Good work.”

“Ehehehe, it was an easy job.”

Seeing the strength of Koutarou and Sanae’s bonds so clearly demonstrated had surprised her, but she soon remembered her own objective and grabbed Koutarou’s hand. She didn’t have time to worry about the little things now, the performance was drawing closer by the minute.

“Come on, Koutarou, wash your face and let’s go! We have a lot to do today!”

“I get it, I get it… Anyway, morning, Theia.”

“That’s right, morning!”

Koutarou knew what kind of time it was, so he obediently followed Theia’s grasp. From the strength in her small hand, he could feel her enthusiasm for the performance.

Koutarou was bad at getting up, but Yurika was no better. She could be woken relatively easily, but she didn’t have much willpower, so even once she was woken up, she’d soon go back to

sleep. Both Koutarou and Yurika were somewhat troublesome to wake up. Often, extreme measures that would make Yurika complain were needed, like cold water or a squeaky hammer.

“Ho, It’s an easy victory today, ho-!”

“We’ve got a secret weapon from Theia-chan, ho-!”

After washing his face, whilst he was returning to the main area, the two haniwa – Karama and Koroma overtook him. They were working together to carry a small bottle. The bottle itself was clear, but the liquid inside it was a deep red, making the bottle look red. There was a white label stuck to the bottle with the product’s name written on it in red and black. The label was written in a foreign language, so Koutarou didn’t understand what it said, but he knew that it was to wake Yurika up. Koutarou soon lost interest and headed towards the dining table.

“So you’re finally done then.”

“The performance is today, so if I hadn’t washed my face properly, you’d have been angry.”

“True, so I’m not angry, this is praise.”

“Then say it a little more kindly.”

“It’s okay, I’ll be kind to you… here, Koutarou.”

“Thanks.”

It was still early, so the dining table wasn’t prepared for the meal, instead, the script that Sanae had given him was spread across the table. He was going to use the time until the meal to go over the programme again.

“Yurika-chan, wake up, ho-.”

“You can still make it in time, ho-.”

Yurika stirred, then mumbled.

“Noo… I can shtill eat…”

“There’s no choice, ho-.”

“Let’s do it, ho-.”

“Unfastening cap, ho-!”

“Bottle is in position, ho-!”

“Ngug ngug… ack, kuh, kyaaaaaaa!!”

“She’s up, ho-.”

“In one shot, ho-.”

“Geh, ack, s-spi-spicyyy!! What happened!?”

“She’s like a fish out of water, ho-.”

“Humans don’t want to be like that, ho-.”

The room had gotten a little noisy, but whilst clinging to his back, Sanae had blocked Koutarou’s ears so he could keep reading through the script in peace. If he made a mistake in the play it would cause a lot of people bother, especially his partner Harumi, so Koutarou was serious.

Kiriha and Ruth had arrived in room 106 and begun preparing breakfast. As they did, a delicious scent filled the air and it naturally became difficult to concentrate on the script. On top of that, leaving the script on the table would get in their way, so Koutarou put the Kabutonga card he’d been using as a bookmark in between the pages, and temporarily stopped looking it over.

Sanae sniffed and after a pause, said.

“It smells like traditional dashi.”

“But it doesn’t smell like miso, so I suppose it’s not miso soup.”

“Yurika, what do you think breakfast is?”

“I’m sorry, I cahn’t shmell or tashte anything right now.”

“We’re sorry, Yurika-chan, ho-.”

“We didn’t know it was that spicy, ho-.”

“You lot are being bad mannered, sit down and wait properly.”

Sanae was floating in the air with her nose twitching, Theia was lying on her stomach with her legs swaying through the air and Yurika was soothing her now cherry-red tongue with the glass of water in her hands. The three’s postures were bad, nothing like what a girl waiting for breakfast should be like.”

“Okaay.”

Sanae obediently returned to Koutarou’s side and knelt next to him, straight backed and waiting.

“I have to, at least today you have a point.”

Theia too obediently followed his words, for a while she’d been driving in how a knight acted and their manners, so if she didn’t do the same it would be setting a bad example. For the sake of the play today being a success, and to protect her own pride, she too sat down politely.

“I really can’t do it.”

“Well… I’ll let you off, Yurika. You can’t start until your tongue’s better after all.”

“Right.”

Yurika was still on the verge of tears, soothing her tongue. She was hunched over, but taking the circumstances into account, taking issue with that would be cruel. So Koutarou, whilst slightly troubled, let her off.

“We should have breakfast now.”

“Everyone, sorry to keep you waiting.”

As everyone sat themselves around the table, Kiriha and Ruth came into the room. Kiriha carrying an aluminium pot, and Ruth carrying a tray with bowls on, breakfast was ready.

“Kiriha! What’s for breakfast!?”

“Udon.”

“Udon? In the morning?”

“Your highness, we’ll need stamina for the play, so we made udon because it’s easy to digest and get energy from.”

“I see, that’s a good idea.”

“Yurika, it looks like it’s udon, isn’t that good?”

“Really!?”

Breakfast today was udon, it wasn’t a breakfast-like meal, but it was common before sports, the play would require a long time of endurance, so it was an appropriate meal. The slightly transparent tuna dashi, a product of Kiriha’s fastidiousness, put the final touched to the meal.

“Ruth, the bowls.”

“Then have these please.”

Kiriha and Ruth worked together to set the places, then Kiriha cheerfully poured the udon soup into the bowls. Koutarou could feel her femininity from that action and found himself unintentionally fixated.

“A long time ago… mom was like this too…”

Whilst Koutarou looked at Kiriha, he found himself remembering his mother. It had been a long time since he’d lost her, so he could only partially remember her. Kiriha now brought these parts to mind and calmed Koutarou’s feelings.

“What’s wrong, Koutarou?”

Noticing his gaze, Kiriha smiled at him whilst continuing to pour the soup.

“I just thought it looks delicious.”

“Ruth and I are confident in our meal.”

As she’d said, Kiriha closed her eyes slightly and looked at him with a confident expression, but that was only for a few seconds before she returned back to her work.

“Please eat a lot, Satomi-sama.”

Ruth placed one of the bowls that Kiriha had filled with soup in front of him. Ruth was cheerful as well, and like Kiriha seemed familial. If Kiriha had the mother role, Ruth was the capable eldest daughter. Even with the handicap of being an alien, Ruth was still more skilled at housework than Yurika or Sanae. As far as skill at housework was concerned, Ruth wouldn’t lose to Kiriha.

“Let’s eat!! Uwaa, hot!?”

“Your mouth is still swollen, of course that would happen if you just crammed hot food into it.”

“Buh I want to eat it while it’s tasty, and if I don’t, someone might take it.”

“No one’s going to take it, you idiot!”

“Yurika-chan, do you want some water, ho-?”

“I’d like some strawberry milk.”

“We don’t have any, ho-.”

Then Yurika, Sanae and Theia would be the little sisters. With Kiriha and Ruth watching over them, the three of them continued their carefree conversation.

“I wonder when this all became normal…”

At first, Koutarou and the Invading girls had fought, but with the passing of time, they’d come to deeper understandings of each other, from enemies to friends, and finally to something like a family. They’d understood that each with their poor points, they came together to form the pieces of a family.

“We really didn’t get on at first… everyone was desperately trying to drive each other out…”

Koutarou thought back on the days since he met the girls. They were extremely normal days that had piled up between them, finally making them come together.

春
~Spring~

六畳間の侵略者!?

Spring

It was around ten days since Koutarou's apartment had been invaded by the girls. During that time, they had stayed around room 106 and tried to get the right to ownership from Koutarou, and to remove their rivals, the other girls. The relationships between them all were extremely poor.

"Gueh!?"

"Kyaaa!?"

"W-what!?"

"I apologise, Satomi-sama! I had no idea that you would be sleeping in such a place!"

"…So it was you, Ruth-san. My sleeping habits are pretty bad, so don't worry about it."

"Thank you for saying that, I'll take care that it doesn't happen again."

But as an exception to that rule, Koutarou and Ruth's relationship had been good from the start. Because of this, Koutarou wasn't angry at her for treading on him when she came to room 106 from the Blue Knight.

"You don't need to worry about treading on an unintelligent Neanderthal like that."

"What!? Do you want to try saying that again, Tulip!!"

"I'll say it as many times as I like, it doesn't matter how many times you tread on a Neanderthal!"

"You bastard, is that supposed to be a princess' attitude!?"

"Please wait, both of you! You can't just fight! Please calm down!"

"Ruth, but he-"

"Your highness!! You can't really think true loyalty will come from yelling at each other!?"

"Ugh, well…"

"Satomi-sama, please! If we cause trouble in this room, we'll invoke Shizuka-sama's wrath again! I'm sure you don't want that either!"

"T-that's true…"

"Please, listen to my selfish wish and leave your anger behind."

"…"

"…"

"I understand, Ruth, I'll do as you say."

"Your highness!"

"If you've gone so far, there's nothing else I can do, Ruth-san."

"Thank you, Satomi-sama."

"But, I won't forgive you, Tulip."

"That's my line!"

Koutarou and Theia's relationship not having broken down completely yet was certainly thanks to Ruth. Their relationship was nearly as bad as it could be, just opening their mouth would cause an argument that would soon develop to a fist fight. They were both stubborn people so the conflict would escalate in the blink of an eye. However, because Ruth, who they both had a

trusting relationship with was there, they were able to barely avoid a total breakdown between them, she was like a safety device for the two.

“Wait Koutarou, isn’t this unfair!?”

Seeing the resolution between Koutarou and Theia, Sanae was dissatisfied. She was drifting in front of Koutarou with he cheeks puffed out and a pout on her lips.

“If I wake you up, you keep complaining about how I’m too rough and everything, but you don’t complain at all when Ruth steps on you!?”

“In Ruth-san’s case it was a simple accident, wasn’t it?”

“Are you saying you’re dissatisfied with I, the beautiful ghost girl Sanae’s Angel Voice!?”

“Oi, listen to what I’m telling you!”

When Sanae woke Koutarou up, it was generally roughly. Her spiritual powers weren’t precise in the first place and she didn’t pay much attention to how she treated him when waking him.

“It’s rather noisy today.”

Kiriha was cooking in the kitchen, but she separated the dividing curtain and poked her head into the room, looking over the situation with her head tilted in puzzlement.

“It’s got nothing to do with you.”

“I see.”

She’d been treated rather bluntly by Sanae, but she didn’t pay it any mind. She could mostly guess what had gone on in the room from looking over it, the one who understood the antagonism between them all the most was Kiriha, the most adult of all of them.

“Satomi Koutarou, breakfast will be done soon. Could you put your futon away and prepare the table?”

“Sure, I’ll do it now.”

After Kiriha’s appearance, the argument between Koutarou and Sanae naturally died out. That wasn’t necessarily her aim, but she was another factor that kept the situation in room 106 from escalating any further.

At that point, Kiriha and Ruth were already preparing breakfast for room 106. More accurately, since Ruth had only just came from Forthorthe, she was helping, and the majority of the cooking was up to Kiriha. Kiriha’s cooking was basically centred around Japanese cuisine, with the occasional things that were popular with children like Hamburg steak and curry. The meals intended for children were thanks to Sanae’s request, for breakfast too, meals from Sanae’s requests were frequent, octopus shaped sausages and similar were the biggest example.

“Koutarou, Koutarou, eat an octopus next!”

“No, it’s a vegetable next.”

“Eeeehhh!?”

“Eating just the tasty things is bad for you.”

“But I’m a ghost.”

“Aren’t you still a child because you keep saying things like that?”

“Bleh, I’m in my growth period so I need my octopus sausages!”

“You don’t, not at all.”

Sanae was still childish, not just in her likes, but with her personality too. Her request to share senses with Koutarou was one sided, and he thought it was better to teach her, so when appropriate, he would ignore her requests and make sure to eat balanced meals.

“I guess there’s no choice… you’ll eat an octopus last, right?”

“Sure, sure.”

Sanae wasn’t satisfied, but if she kept being too selfish, she’d eventually lose Koutarou’s co-operation, so she’d have to put up with it and be satisfied with salad for now.

Just as they finished their conversation, the cooking timer in Yurika’s hand went off. Yurika’s eyes began to sparkle and she abandoned the timer.

“It’s done!”

Yurika happily tore the lid off of the cup noodles in front of her. Her breakfast were these noodles, in room 106, she was the one with the worst eating habits. Her meals were sweet bread of cup noodles and she ate sweets as snacks. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that her body was made of junk food.

“Let’s eaa~~t!”

With that, Yurika began slurping her noodles with gusto and the smell of artificial flavourings spread throughout the room. The high class smell of miso soup and pickled vegetables was drowned out by the scent of artificial flavourings with moments.

“…D-damn you, Yurika, you’ve ruined my elegant breakfast…”

“Calm down, your highness.”

“Geez, this is why even your spirit smells of ramen!”

“We really need to get rid of her quickly.”

Theia, Sanae and Koutarou’s resolve to get rid of Yurika strengthened.

“…My my… this makes it hard to keep the balance…”

Gazing at all of them, Kiriha alone continued with a wry smile.

“…Hmm?”

Yurika herself didn’t know that she was in a dangerous situation, after tilting her head at the strange tension within the room she began slurping her noodles again. The girl who’s very spiritual presence smelled of artificial flavourings was completely clueless to both the smell hanging in the air, and the mood. Seeing her carefree acts, the three of them lost their motivation and dejectedly continued eating.

“There’s no helping it…”

“Koutarou, definitely eat an octopus now!”

“Okay okay.”

With the room filled with the smell of artificial flavourings, they wanted something which smelled stronger, so the group’s hands naturally reached for the octopus sausages. Kiriha favoured nutritious food that was good for the body, so the sausages were made with all natural ingredients and they had a strong flavour.

“That’s good, it’s the last one- Ahhhhh!?”

“Hmm, delicious.”

But in the instant Koutarou was about to eat it, Theia had grabbed it with her chopsticks from the side and eaten it first.

“You bastard, you stole my octopus!”

“That was mine!!”

This had angered Koutarou and Sanae, Koutarou was angry because Theia had snatched it when she knew he was going to eat it, and Sanae was angry simply because she couldn’t eat it.

“It’s your own fault, if you don’t take things like that quickly, of course that would happen.”

Theia smirked and ridiculed the two of them. The sausages were put on plates in the centre of the table with the salad, so Theia was right, but just because that was logical, it added more fuel to the fire.

“Damn you Tulip… It looks like I really do need to finish things with you!”

“Awww, I was looking forward to finally eating an octopus!!”

“Ho ho ho ho, that’s why you’re a Neanderthal and a commoner. Hurry up and admit your loss and surrender to me as your leader! Ho ho ho ho ho ho!”

“Y-your highness, you’re going too far!”

Ruth was frantic but too late to stop it and the fissure between Koutarou and Theia grew larger.

To get back at her for her arrogance, Koutarou watched Theia like a hawk, looking for an opening. But Theia was intelligent, and aware of her surroundings, so he couldn’t find a useable opening.

“Then… how about you, Theiamillis-san?”

“The battle of Nagashino.”

“That’s correct, even though you were born abroad, you’ve really studied.”

“But miss, if Takeda’s cavalry really could have been wiped out by the three stage volley, what actually happened?”

“Oh, that’s a good question, Theiamillis-san. Actually, opinions on that…”

Theia had noticed Koutarou watching her and continued to show off her abilities. This was one of those occasions, she faced Koutarou and grinned at him before sitting back down in her seat.

“She just keeps getting worse and worse…”

In the end, it became showing Koutarou her superiority, and that just served to further increase his dislike. Koutarou couldn’t find a weak point on Theia, and Theia couldn’t win Koutarou’s respect. On the surface it was a disagreeable situation for Koutarou, but both of them were far from their goals. After all, the two of them were childish.

“Your highness… Satomi-sama…”

Ruth had noticed this, but she also knew it wasn’t a problem she could easily solve. It was one of those problems which needed time to be solved.

“Just a little more, if they can compromise…”

Both of them were fundamentally honest and kind, but neither of them would give in. That’s why this had happened. For Ruth, who understood both of them, it was a vexing wait.

Compared to Theia’s offensive approach, the other three girls had a much more amicable approach to their invasions. The one being most proactive about appearing friendly was Kiriha.

“Satomi-kun, would you eat lunch with me? I’ve made food for you too.”

Kiriha perfectly hid her true intentions of invasion behind a smile and the behaviour of a high school girl. Her tone wasn’t her usual formal way of speaking, but that of a normal high school student speaking to their friend.

“Ah, well-“

“Whoa, seriously, Kurano-san!?”

“Satomi-kun of all people!? Not Matsudaira-kun!?”

From the natural way she asked, Koutarou was about to agree, but as their classmates started making an uproar, he remembered just who she was.

“Careful, careful. You were taken in by her words again…”

Koutarou mentally breathed a large sigh of relief and shook his head at Kiriha.

“I’m grateful you’d invite me, but I already have plans today.”

Koutarou didn’t have any plans, but it was clear that she was trying to get in to Koutarou’s heart to take room 106. He had no intention of walking into a trap, so he declined her invitation.

“I see… that’s a shame…”

Kiriha didn’t push the matter and easily withdrew. Koutarou thought it was strange, but Kiriha’s ingenuity was shown here. With her head slightly bowed in apparent disappointment, she returned to her own seat and sat down without a word. Then, looking at the two lunch boxes on her desk she let out a miserable sigh, setting off another uproar.

“You’re awful, Satomi-kun! She went through all that effort to work up the courage and approach you!”

“That’s right Satomi! Refusing Kurano-san’s invitation is too much of a waste don’t you think!?”

Kiriha’s act as a girl that was depressed because she’d worked up the courage to go and talk to the boy she liked but was immediately shot down was perfect. Giving everyone around a bad impression of Koutarou.

“Y-you lot, you don’t know what she’s really like so-“

“Aaaahhh!? Are you trying to say it’s Kurano-san’s fault!?”

“Koutarou, what the girl’s really like doesn’t matter! Youth is all about beautiful girls right in front of you! That’s what men are really like, right!?”

Koutarou was surrounded by his classmates in the blink of an eye and receiving waves of criticisms. He finally understood Kiriha’s aim.

“I see, whether I accepted or not didn’t matter! This is why she came to school!”

If Koutarou had agreed to the invitation, that would have been fine, being able to get a good relationship like that would be the best, and even if she couldn’t, she could give the impression they did to the other invaders.

If Koutarou refused however, she could guide their classmates like this and herd Koutarou in that way. If this happened multiple times, it would become even more effective, Koutarou would become less comfortable at school and may hand the room over, or if not, may start eating with Kiriha.

Koutarou had refused the invitation, but it still played into her hands. Moving to Kitsushouharukaze high school was for this terrifying and elaborate plan from the start.

Seeing Koutarou surrounded by his classmates, Sanae made a disappointed face. She was the only one among the invaders that had a truce with Koutarou. Kiriha winning him over wasn't a good development.

"She definitely is the one to watch out for the most."

"Who is 'she?'"

Yurika responded to Sanae's murmur after slurping down some noodles and then turning to face her, floating in the air nearby.

"It's Kiriha, obviously."

"She's a good person, isn't she!"

"You moron… That's her trap."

"Eh, really!?"

Yurika's surprise made her flinch, sloshing the noodles around in the cup.

"She's acting as a good person first, but her final aim is to invade the surface. Don't get taken in, Yurika!"

"Really… I thought she was a good person…"

"I need to tell Koutarou later too. He can't show any openings."

From Sanae's viewpoint, Kiriha was aiming for Koutarou first to make him cut ties with Sanae. Sanae and Koutarou had a truce so would cooperate, giving them a numerical advantage over the other three invaders. To remove that advantage, that would be the natural selection for Kiriha to make.

"Honestly, what would he do if I weren't here?"

Looking at Koutarou's classmates, taken in by Kiriha's scheme, Sanae puffed her cheeks out. In her gaze, friendliness towards Koutarou had started to mix in, but she herself hadn't noticed that yet. Sanae still called them enemies, in the end they should only have a truce because she wanted to taste food.

"Aah… If this keeps up, I'll be the only one having a bad time… what should I do… Aaaaahh, I can't think of anything!"

Finally noticing her own sense of impending doom, Yurika couldn't think of a plan and just dropped her head into her hands. But ironically, Koutarou and the other invaders had no sense of danger about Yurika.

"Aaahh!? My luuunch!?"

She thought that leaving it alone would probably make it ruin itself, and that thought was probably correct.

Koutarou wasn't comfortable being surrounded by his classmates so was going to the cafeteria. Koutarou wouldn't budge even after the invaders appeared, but continuous criticism from his classmates wasn't enjoyable.

"What an interesting development, Kou."

"Leave off."

"Well, I'm eating here, you can go to the cafeteria yourself."

"Seriously, you've got no camaraderie, McKenzie."

Koutarou had thought he'd go to the cafeteria with Kenji, but he'd already started eating the lunch the girl he was currently going out with had made him. With no other choice, Koutarou headed toward the classroom exit, but on the way, someone fell in to step next to him and met eyes with him.

"Hohohoho, Neanderthal, how pitiful, being done in by Kiriha and slinking away…"

It was Theia, holding a folding fan across her mouth delicately. Whilst she was waiting for Ruth to finish preparing the meal, she'd noticed Koutarou's situation.

"Shut up, you worthless princess."

"Whatever you say in these circumstances, all I hear is the howling of a beaten dog!"

"Damn it, get off your high horse…" Koutarou's face twisted in displeasure and he walked past her. "Hmm…?"

But in that instant, he caught sight of the meal spread on her desk. It was food from Theia's home, the Holy Forthorthean Empire. There was seasoned bird meat, bread that used fruit and a seafood soup. They'd all just been taken from their containers that kept them warm, so they still had their flavour.

"That's it!"

And there, Koutarou noticed something, this was a once in a lifetime chance to get back at Theia.

"Thank you!"

Koutarou quickly reached out a hand and snatched the one piece of bird meat not set out and threw it into his mouth.

"Aaaaahhh!?"

"Sa-Satomi-sama!?"

Because Theia wasn't with Koutarou around the dinner table, she had completely let her guard down and couldn't stop him. Koutarou was filled with both this fact and the meat's flavour as he swallowed it.

"Ah, that was tasty, thanks for the food, Tulip."

"D-damn you, Neanderthal! Do you understand just what a primitive stealing from the imperial family means!?"

Theia lost her composure in an instant and with clenched teeth stabbed at Koutarou with her fan.

"Y-your highness, calm down please, we're at school!"

Ruth was troubled by this, Theia had lost her composure and wasn't paying attention to her surroundings and was waving her status around. If this continued, her official status would be revealed, and interfering with an alien civilisation that there were no diplomatic relations with was prohibited by galactic treaties.

"I don't… What I do know is that Ruth-san really can cook, well done Ruth-san, it was really tasty."

"Damn you! It looks like I have to teach a primitive their place!"

"Go ahead and try! A worthless princess like you can't do much!"

"I said, didn't I!? I'll teach you the difference in our status!"

With insults flying between them, the situation kept heating up, their faces were nearly together and they were having a shouting match, just like children. However, this was a dangerous child's fight that couldn't be left alone/

"Your highness, Satomi-sama, please, calm down! At this rate everyone will be unhappy!"

"I won't even listen to Ruth! You really need a good beating, at least once!"

"Just try it, Tulip, I'll plant you in the school flower beds!"

Ruth was frantic trying to calm the both of them but they wouldn't listen, just antagonising each other further. It seemed like any second they'd grab hold of each other and start a brawl.

"It's too late, I won't forgive you even if you apologise, Neanderthal!"

"Who'd apologise to someone like you!?"

Ignoring Ruth's attempts, the two finally swung their fists.

Full strength punches hit both of their cheeks, knocking them backwards.

"You can't, both of you!"

A fist fight right in the middle of the classroom at lunch would cause a large amount of damage. Ruth had failed to calm them but was about to get in between them and separate them before there was any damage dealt to the surroundings. However, in the instant before she did, someone else separated them.

"What are you two doing!? Did you forget your promise with me!?"

Shizuka had separated the two of them and moved quickly to catch their right arms and stop their punches, turning a fierce gaze full of anger on the two. A strong desire to beat the two back in to line burned in her eyes.

“Shizuka, the Neanderthal stole my food!”

“If you’re going to use that as an excuse, then you stole my octopus sausage!”

“Be quiet!”

Seeing the two wouldn’t stop fighting, Shizuka strengthened her grip and their bones creaked.

“Ow ow ow.”

“Ugh!”

The pain finally stopped their movements.

“I don’t know what you’re fighting about, but the important thing is, you’re going to stop fighting right now, or I’ll stop you fighting for all eternity, whichever you prefer.”

Shizuka’s eyes shone. Koutarou and Theia understood what she was getting at all too well and started to shake. If they didn’t stop fighting they wouldn’t be able to fight again.

“Kuh… Neanderthal, I didn’t lose to you!”

Theia pursed her lips in distaste and opened her fist and looked away.

“Same to you!”

Koutarou also opened his fist and looked in the opposite direction. Finally, Shizuka released their arms.

“Listen, you two. Next time, I won’t ask questions.”

“…Right.”

“…I understand.”

Koutarou and Theia were still looking away but they agreed to Shizuka’s words. The places were Shizuka had grabbed were red and swollen, and they were still painful. With this, Koutarou and Theia had the fact that direct fighting wasn’t an option engraved upon their hearts.

From the incident at lunch time, Koutarou and Theia realised that fighting individually not as part of a contest didn’t help any of them, but their competitiveness towards each other didn’t change. So since the incident had been resolved they waited for a chance to fight without Shizuka being able to blame them. That of course happened after dinner every night, with the games to gain control of the room.

“I thought we could use this game today.”

“Heart Pounding Land Development Fantasia? What’s that?”

“It looks like a game were you buy and develop land to raise your status.”

“Even though it’s aimed at children with the fantasy design, it’s a fairly dark game.”

“Everyone hasn’t played this yet, so it’ll break the pattern of just me being bad.”

“A good idea, Nijino Yurika.”

“But Yurika-chan, it’s impressive you have this, ho-.”

“I saved it from the rubbish.”

“That’s Yurika-chan for you, ho-!”

The game for tonight was a board game that Yurika had saved from the rubbish. The game was company management drawn with dark humour, focussing on the seedy side of company management. It was a game none of them had played, so none of them had any advantages or disadvantages so they all agreed to play it.

“Ha ha, the perfect game.”

“It appears we’re in agreement for once, Neanderthal. I’ll show you the difference between us!”

Koutarou and Theia welcomed a game that would let them have a clear contest. Both of them thought it a good way to settle what happened at lunch time.

“Separate from the points, how about whoever wins out of us kneels down in front of the other?”

“Sounds good! I can already see you crawling up to me now!”

Their competitiveness rose again, and they could only think of how to beat each other, the fight for ownership and the existence of the other invaders completely slipped their minds.

Tonight’s game, Heart Pounding Land Development Fantasia, was played with dice, it was a board game where you bought land and developed it over and over. There was no goal square, moving according to the dice you’d eventually return to the start square. The squares were primarily owner-less plots of land, if you stopped on one you could buy it. But if the plot already had an owner, you had to pay rent and couldn’t buy it. After buying a plot, you could allocate funds and develop it, increasing the rent. These were the basic rules of the game.

To win at this game, you had to roll and aim for squares without owners and not stop on squares that were already owned. Then, when someone couldn’t pay the entire rent and went bankrupt, the remaining players’ places would be decided by what assets they owned. This game required timing with purchasing and developing plots of land, preparing rent money for stopping on other players’ squares, luck with the dice and the player’s management sense. Its fantastic appearance disguised its actual complexity.

“U-uuh, if I knew it was this kind of game, I wouldn’t have got it.”

And when the rules were read out, it was just like everyone imagined, Yurika was awful at the game. By nature Yurika rushed into things, she didn’t have a personality suited for forethought and planning. That personality was demonstrated in how she played.

“It’s because you just bought things without thinking.”

“But if you don’t buy things when they’re cheap, you won’t be able to buy them later, will you?”

“…It’s not some special sale on cup noodles.”

In the opening game, Yurika went around buying all she could, spending all of her money. She couldn’t develop them so her income didn’t go up, but she still stopped on other people’s properties so she had to sell hers piece by piece to pay off her debts, it was a vicious circle.

“Is that why you’re doing well, Sanae-chan?”

“Look, I developed an accessory shop chain.”

Sanae had focussed her funds on industries related to her hobbies and gotten definite results, cornering the market. There was a rule that if you made a chain of similar properties you got a bonus, cutting the cost for Sanae to develop those properties so she maintained a balance between development and her remaining funds.

“I don’t know whether to keep focussed on accessories or also go into apparel, it’s not an easy decision!”

“You’re doing well, Sanae.”

“Fufufu, even you can’t keep up tonight Kiriha, with me, Sanae-chan!”

“Maybe not… Incidentally, if you’re going into apparel I don’t mind selling you my excess at a set price.”

“Really!?”

Sanae was playing well, and being able to take properties off of Kiriha made her eyes sparkle. In this game, players were allowed to trade and negotiate, negotiations like this one were an important skill for being able to win and advance,

“Ah, but you’ve probably got some sneaky conditions or something!?”

“I don’t… Just if I were to stop on one of them that you won’t charge me rent, paying rent on a property that was yours just seems stupid, doesn’t it?”

“Hmm, well just that would be fine. I’ll buy them, I’ll buy them! The Sanae-chan brand grows!”

“Then the negotiations are a success.”

Kiriha handed over the deed cards to Sanae and took the money in return, then using that money to develop her own properties. Kiriha didn’t have the luck with the dice that Sanae did, but she was managing her properties well.

Compared to the fairly stable developments of the other three, Koutarou and Theia had extremely unstable developments.

“Tulip will be coming through here soon… If I develop this I can beat her.”

“Neanderthal, just go ahead and try, if you think that much is enough to stop me you’re very much mistaken!”

Koutarou and Theia were focussed on each other, developing their properties around the other’s piece and buying properties near the other’s to get in the way of their developments/ They could only think of defeating the enemy in front of them. Thanks to this their money and properties fluctuated wildly and they walked a narrow tightrope managing them.

“Kukuku, don’t come crying to me later, Tulip!”

“That goes for you, I’ll have you on your knees!”

Koutarou and Theia’s fierce battle continued for a while, their antagonistic feelings towards each other only growing.

The first game ended with Sanae establishing a chain of clothes maker shops and winning. In second was Kiriha, Koutarou was third and Theia was fourth. In last place was Yurika. The three lowest placed had all stopped on one of Sanae’s properties and had a large amount of money taken, ending the game.

The game was played three more times, and the rankings in these games were put together to calculate the positions for tonight.

In first was Kiriha, keeping second in all the games. With her safe management policies and skilful negotiations Kiriha had increased the number of places she could stop safely to include some of her enemies’ squares. She used a play style which made it unlikely for her to lose from beginning to end.

“I lost because I let myself get taken in by your arguments, Kiriha.”

“Thanks to that it finished without you taking rent from me.”

“You were safe on your own and my spaces.”

“That’s right.”

“If I’d taken rent from you too I’d have won.”

Sanae was second. She had good luck from start to end and every game she built up a large conglomerate. However, her policies were too idealistic and she lost a lot of profit to Kiriha, so it wasn’t stable, putting her in second at the end.

“I used too much money in your places, Sanae-chan.”

“Well that’s your speciality.”

“I think I definitely bought all of the Sanae-chan brand products.”

“Actually, Yurika, you used money on my properties too.”

“You’re always wasting money, huh?”

“Uuuu…”

And of course, a tear stained Yurika was in last place. Her hasty policies and inherent bad luck combined, making her money only decrease. She didn’t use money for developments and only had properties which didn’t bring in money. Eventually the other players’ developments made her have to sell off land and she finally went bankrupt. This happened three times before in the fourth game she finally realised that way didn’t work, but by that point it was too late, and her defeat was clear to see for all.

“Damn it, a draw…”

“And I thought I’d get you to kneel down today for sure… Mnngh.”

Unexpectedly, Koutarou and Theia had the same number of points and were in third place. In each of the four games they kept exchanging their rankings, so when they were combined they had the same number of points. Therefore, the talk of getting someone to kneel before the other went unfulfilled.

“Both of you could only think of the other, Koutarou, Theiamillis-dono.”

“You were in a world of your own, it’s creepy.”

“You still placed higher than me though…”

The others were slightly shocked and had bitter smiles. If Koutarou and Theia had paid more attention to their surroundings they might have placed higher. And that continued now.

“I’ll get you tomorrow!”

“You should prepare yourself, I’ll make you regret opposing a Forthorthean princess!”

The pair’s eyes burned with ill-will towards each other. Where they were, the fight for ownership of room 106 had nothing to do with it. Their feelings were aimed at the opponent in front of them. It looked like the childish fight would continue a little while longer.

At breakfast the next morning, a new conflict arose. It was between Sanae and Yurika, trying to push their carrots off to each other.

“You’re malnourished Yurika, so you can have my carrots.”

“Ah!? That’s not fair, you’re just pushing what you don’t like onto me. You won’t grow either if you don’t eat properly will you!?”

“Well I’m a ghost. I don’t need to eat.”

“That’s unfair, you only say that at times like this!”

Sanae and Yurika were both moving their carrots on to the other's plate. Sanae's powers were ill-suited to delicate work, and Yurika was clumsy to begin with so they moved the carrots at about the same rate, never reaching a conclusion.

"Ane-san, we want to eat something, ho-!"

"We want something other than spiritual power sometimes, ho-!"

"Then it looks like the food's not popular over there."

"Ho-! The fish is tasty, ho-!"

"A Japanese breakfast is fish then, ho-!"

The Haniwa had started to eat Yurika and Sanae's untouched fish, clumsily using chopsticks to eat it.

"Aaaaahh!? My fish!"

"Damn it, I was caught up with Yurika!"

With their attention on the fight over carrots, by the time they noticed, the fish had been mostly eaten.

"Ah, sorry, I didn't think you were going to eat it."

"It's Yurika's fault, she wouldn't eat the carrots!"

"Why's it my fault!? You were just being unfair!"

"Well… I apologised but there's canned tuna and fish cakes. You can have them."

"Ah, I prefer those, they don't have any bones."

"…For being so greedy, you sure are picky."

Before the conflict got out of hand, the two were calmed by the canned tuna and fish cakes. The two of them weren't the kind of people to hold a grudge for a long time so the new accompaniment meant the argument fizzled out. The fact that the Haniwa had also eaten the carrots had an effect too.

"Damn you, you're so persistent…"

"So you won't give in, Neanderthal…"

On the other hand, Koutarou and Theia's conflict was much more deeply routed, even now there were still signs of it. They had hold of each other's chopsticks and were glaring across a plate at each other. On that plate there was an accompaniment, octopus shaped sausages, the majority had been eaten and there was one left. Both were after the final one.

"I won't lose to you!"

"Primitive, you really don't understand how foolish it is to stand against a princess!"

If the opponent had been anyone else, Koutarou and Theia would have been able to back down, but with the opponent being someone they held resentment against, they couldn't simply back down. However, they were terrified of inviting Shizuka's intervention so couldn't use force, so they couldn't attack or retreat, just continue glaring at each other.

"Your highness, Satomi-sama…"

Ruth had thought since yesterday that the two of them fighting wasn't a good thing. As a servant, she couldn't abandon the conflict, but whilst watching the two argue, a different thought sprouted in her chest. That maybe this conflict was needed to make a proper relationship between them.

“Has her highness ever argued so fervently with someone else before…?”

Taking Koutarou as a vassal and gaining control over room 106 was Theia’s trial to gain the right to ascend to the throne. If she just wanted the wording to be fulfilled, soothing the two and having the relationship appear to be that of lord and retainer and returning to Forthorthe would be fine. They wouldn’t have to return to Earth again, so there would be no issue.

But for Koutarou to be a vassal in the true meaning, and for Theia to gain the right to ascend to the throne in the true meaning of the trial, a facsimile of the relationship was meaningless. Knowing each others good and bad points, and still serving was a true lord and retainer’s relationship. Actually, Ruth had built that kind of relationship with Theia.

Rather than someone who spouted empty praises and only maintained a relationship on the surface, someone like Koutarou who would clash with their true feelings was more trustworthy. Moreover, Koutarou was from Earth, and clearly didn’t care about her background. It was hard to tell from a glance, but Koutarou had the qualities to be Theia and Ruth’s greatest ally.

From that point of view, it could be said that their first step was a step backwards, but it could also be said that it was necessary to show their emotions. A fight that was too severe would be a problem, it would be troubling if it was enough to ruin their relationship.

“So… Eii!”

“Ah!?”

“Ruth!?”

“Fufufu, I ate it before it got cold.”

Ruth began to think of it as her duty to stop things before it ruined their relationship, that would surely give the best result. Ruth lost her hesitation.

“I guess it’s fine if it’s you, Ruth-san. Hmph.”

“I’ll overlook it today. Hmph.”

Without knowing Ruth’s thoughts, Koutarou and Theia purposefully looked away from each other. Up until yesterday, it had concerned Ruth, but it didn’t anymore.

“Fufufu, I understand why Sanae-sama likes them.”

So even though it was slightly cold, the food in her mouth was exceedingly tasty.

夏
~Summer~

After a good deal of time and experiences, the atmosphere in room 106 had calmed considerably. They were much more cooperative and less likely to argue.

“…Aah, it’s no good…”

So Koutarou’s worries weren’t just due to the invading girls, but also himself. Essentially, he was returning to being an everyday student.

“What’s wrong Koutarou, what are you sighing about?” Sanae answered Koutarou’s sigh gently. She was clinging to his back and followed his gaze to the open window, showing the summer sun illuminating the town. “Go ahead and ask me, Sanae-chan, I’ll solve all of your worries.”

“It’s not really something I need to go out of my way and talk about.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine, just go ahead and tell me.”

The other day, Sanae had been captured by ghost hunters and then saved by the residents of room 106. That brought them one step closer together and let them compromise. The biggest example would be Sanae and Koutarou, who were at the centre of that incident, Sanae now treated Koutarou as a close friend. On top of having a truce with her, being treated like a good friend meant he had no reason to be cruel to her.

“Well… Summer’s already nearly half over, right?”

“Yeah, every day’s hot and nasty, are you worried about the heat?”

“No, the days being hot like this means the treasures on the mountain will grow up nice and big.”

“What treasures?”

Theia perked up hearing the word treasures, and stared at Koutarou whilst blinking perplexedly. With the athletics festival and saving Sanae, Theia’s aggressive personality had softened greatly. Even now her personality still clashed with Koutarou’s and they argued, but she didn’t treat him like a primitive anymore but acknowledged him as a worthy rival.

“Well…” Koutarou didn’t answer immediately, after starting to speak, he looked around the room, and after confirming that a certain person wasn’t around, finally opened his mouth. “Beetles, if the summer’s hot like this, I’ll definitely be able to catch a big one… I want to go catch one…”

Koutarou sighed again and his gaze returned to the window with a hint of longing. Far in front of where he was looking, a mountain rose up, decorated with beautiful green trees. There would surely be big beetles waiting there for him.

“Well you reap what you sow, don’t you.”

“I said it wasn’t something I needed to talk about.”

“Buh.”

Sanae puffed her cheeks out in dissatisfaction at Koutarou’s answer.

The reason Koutarou couldn’t go out and catch a beetle was because of Ruth’s hatred of them. When they went to the sea, Koutarou mistook Ruth for a tree with beetles on it whilst half-asleep and held on to her, as a result, Ruth now hated beetles.

Sanae was upset because she felt it was because of Koutarou that she couldn’t do something interesting, she wanted to play with Koutarou.

“You truly are an idiot…”

Theia sighed after listening only to be let down. She didn't understand how Koutarou could be so excited just about insects. Theia was a girl, and an alien at that so it was hard for her to understand an Earthling boy's feelings.

"Now, don't say that. Satomi Koutarou wasn't being malicious."

Kiriha was different from Sanae and Theia and was on Koutarou's side. From when she was young she'd been a tomboy who enjoyed insect catching, and her treasured thing was a rare hero card with a beetle as its motif. So she had an understanding of a boy's hobbies.

"My only ally is Kiriha-san then…"

"Ane-san is kind, ho-!."

"Koutarou, if you're getting married, take Anego, ho-."

"Maybe."

"Pay attention! It's obvious she's just doing it to trick you!"

"I didn't intend that at all."

"I don't believe you! Bleh!"

"Well, it looks like I'm hated. Fufufu."

Even though Sanae was snapping at her, Kiriha had an easy smile.

"Neanderthal, you already have one freeloader, you don't need any more."

"I'm not a freeloader! I'm the loving guardian spirit, Sanae-chan!"

"That's not it, I was talking about Yurika."

"Hmm?"

Hearing her name, Yurika looked up for a moment but soon returned to slurping her cup noodle.

"Oh yeah, Koutarou is already looking after Yurika."

"I'm not a freeloader, I make my own food."

She didn't like being treated like a freeloader, so after finishing what was in her mouth, she showed Sanae her cup noodle. That was Yurika's tiny pride.

"But you know, Yurikaa. if you're just going to keep eating that kind of thing, you may as well become a freeloader, right? Your body itself might start smelling of artificial flavourings."

"Uuum… Satomi-san, I'm becoming a freeloader from now on!"

She only needed two seconds to decide and then she threw away her pride and decided to become a freeloader."

"I refuse!"

Of course, Koutarou had no intention of allowing this, he was already unhappy with her living in the upper half of the wardrobe.

"Whhhyyy!? You don't have to be so mean! Would you be alright with me being lost at the roadside!?"

"Get lost where you like."

"Even though you say that, you're still happy you live with me~~."

"Why you… what the hell goes on in your head?"

Like this, the relationships between Koutarou and the invading girls had softened considerably since they first met. They'd gained sympathy and understanding towards each other, but still had to remember they were enemies. So they had positive and negative feelings fighting against each other. It was too soon to call each other friends, but they also didn't want to call each other enemies. If one was troubled the others would help but they'd at some time need to defeat the others. Their emotions were complicated.

Around the mid-point of the summer holidays, Koutarou was mostly free. It being mid way through the holidays, you might think he would have homework left, but he'd actually already finished it, both to avoid worrying his father and because Harumi, his senior in the knitting society had said they'd start activities again once he'd finished. Koutarou wouldn't lie to those two and had finished his homework in July.

He'd finished his homework and the society's activities had resumed, but of course, it wasn't every day. And even if there were, it wouldn't be from morning until evening, so Koutarou had more free time than he knew what to do with. This was why he had been thinking about wanting to go insect hunting.

"Satomi-sama, the sun is strong today, so wear this hat."

"Thank you, Ruth-san."

Koutarou lowered his head and Ruth put a straw hat there. To avoid wasting time, Koutarou had decided to work. He was working at the same place as he had been since spring, excavating the ruins. The ruins also needed more workers in the summer so it was a good windfall.

"And there's barely tea in this canteen. Make sure to take breaks and re-hydrate."

"Leave it to me, Ruth. I'll supervise and make sure he drinks."

Sanae took the canteen that Ruth prepared and put it over her shoulder, she was also going with Koutarou to his work.

Since the kidnapping at the beach, Sanae had been with Koutarou more than before. Among the invaders, she was the only one who had given up fighting with Koutarou. She didn't think of getting points anymore, she just kept herself from being driven out. Even now, on paper, Sanae and Koutarou were enemies, but she already admitted to herself that they weren't. On top of their promise of a truce, now that their relationship as enemies was gone, all that was left was their relationship other than that. Sanae felt that as long as she didn't lose the chance to meet her mother again, she wanted the days like this to continue.

"Please do, Sanae-sama."

"How often should he drink?"

"If possible, every thirty minutes."

"Roger that… Koutarou, you need to do what I, your work leader, say, got it?"

"I got it, I got it."

"You've not got enough love."

"I understand. Leave it to me, my lovely work leader Sanae-sama."

"Hmph, good."

Sanae was happy with his response and went around to his back and held on. Sanae carried the canteen, towel, tissues and other things and Koutarou did the actual work. Somehow this is how the roles had come to be distributed.

"Ooh, it's nice and cool."

Sanae being on Koutarou's back was cooling and convenient for working under the blazing sun. Sanae was a ghost so direct contact with living beings let her take some of their heat. The shuddering feeling from ghosts was being used in place of a cooler. And Sanae was useful for making Koutarou take breaks when he got immersed in excavating.

"Koutarou, where's your gratefulness for Sanae-chan's chic maiden power?"

"If you make it a little cooler I'll be really grateful."

"Like this?"

"Oh, that's it, I'm truly grateful for all of your work, leader."

"Right, if there's anything troubling you, you can ask your leader, me, at any time."

Seeing their interaction, Ruth closed her eyes slightly in enjoyment.

"Satomi-sama, Sanae-sama, you get on very well now, don't you?"

"That's not true."

"Nihihihihi, you can't lie, Koutarou, the proof's right here, isn't it?"

Sanae poked Koutarou's cheek with her left hand and showed Koutarou the charm hanging around her neck with her right hand. Neatly embroidered on it was "Family Safety" and as long as it protected Sanae, Koutarou's words were meaningless to her.

"He really isn't someone who wants to fight, we just haven't built up trust with him… so her highness will eventually…"

As Ruth watched their conversation, she hoped that someday he and Theia might become like that too. They hadn't grown closer because Koutarou rescued Sanae, but because just before that, they'd shared their true feelings.

"Well, see you later, Ruth-san."

"See you lateeer!"

"Take care."

So Ruth watched them go with a smile. Seeing their understanding in front of her eyes, even if their route was different, gave her the courage to keep going. Ruth started to think that their future wasn't bleak.

Ruth returned to the main room and a voice called out to her, Ruth's master, Theia.

"Ruth, you're unusually happy, did something good happen?"

As far as Theia knew, Ruth was someone who always smiled, but she seemed happier than usual now. She found it very strange from just seeing off Koutarou and Sanae.

"No, nothing in particular. I just thought I could see Satomi-sama and Sanae-sama being real siblings and it made me happy."

"… Sanae might not be a problem for taking over the room anymore." Murmured Theia, looking towards the entrance. From where she was, she couldn't see the entrance, or of course the two that had left, but she could faintly imagine them, Sanae clinging to Koutarou's back. Like Ruth said, they were like siblings, noisily heading to work.

"Sanae was lonely and isolated waiting for her parents, but living with Koutarou pulled her out from that isolation. Possibly even waiting for her parents isn't painful anymore."

Kiriha added to Theia's comment.

Sanae found living with Koutarou fun, so even if she gained the rights to the room she might not drive Koutarou out. And as long as Koutarou was there, waiting for her parents wasn't painful, and Koutarou too might not kick her out if he gained the rights to the room. If that was the case then it didn't matter whether Sanae succeeded at invading or not.

"I'm sure Sanae found meaning in invading itself…" Said Yurika, before carrying on slurping her noodles.

"Yurika…"

Theia's eyes went wide at Yurika's innocent words. They were most likely correct and hearing those words from Yurika, Theia, Ruth and Kiriha couldn't hide their surprise.

"She's not just a simple idiot… if so… no, that can't be…"

For an instant, Theia considered believing what Yurika always said about her being a magical girl. But with a wry smile, she chased those thoughts from her head.

"Hmm?"

Noticing their gazes but not knowing the reason, Yurika looked around in puzzlement and after a few seconds tilting her head, went back to slurping her cup noodles.

With Sanae still riding on his back, Koutarou reached Kisshouharukaze High School. The ruins Koutarou was working at were at the top of a small mountain by the school. Whilst on his way, the sun had beat down mercilessly on his head and the hat Ruth had given him quickly proved its usefulness.

"It's surprisingly stuffy in the hat though."

"Is this better then?"

Sanae reached out her right hand and touched Koutarou's hat, and because she was a ghost, her hand easily passed through the hat and rested on his head.

"Thanks."

"Ehehehehe~."

Sanae's hand released a cold aura. Lowering the surrounding temperature was a plain technique of ghosts, but it was convenient for the summer heat.

"It's not useful at all in the winter though, is it?"

"It's really helpful now.

"Then praise me more."

"Well done, well done."

Koutarou stroked Sanae's head over his shoulder and she closed her eyes in happiness. Still smiling, Sanae started playing with Koutarou's head, tickling it gently or slightly pulling on his hair. Sanae kept playing with him, like a small child does with their father in the middle of a nap.

"Hey, Sanae."

"What?"

"…No, it's nothing."

"Really?"

Koutarou thought he would say something to Sanae, but wasn't entirely sure what so he swallowed his words. Koutarou knew that Sanae doing this wasn't unpleasant, but he didn't

know how to put it into words and make sure she didn't misunderstand, so he gave up explaining it.

"Funfuun♪"

"The weather's good today, isn't it."

"Right!"

Koutarou kept walking under the summer skies with Sanae on his back, and their smiles were as clear as the sky.

Koutarou was nearly at the school when a bus overtook them. The bus stopped at a bus stop in front of the school and several people got off and ran off. They were all wearing school uniforms so he guessed they were students. They were all headed towards the school, but there was one girl heading the opposite direction, down the hill road.

"Koutarou, isn't that Harumi?"

"Satomi-kuun!"

"It is. Sakuraba-senpai!"

She was the leader of the knitting society that Koutarou belonged to, Sakuraba Harumi. She noticed Koutarou from the bus and came to greet him. When he noticed her, he ran towards her, and Sanae followed slightly behind.

"Hello, Sakuraba-senpai."

"Hello, Satomi-kun."

"Why are you here? I thought there wasn't a meeting today?"

"I came for the meeting for the cultural festival, I'm still the one in charge of the club after all."

The knitting society weren't meeting today but Harumi was here for the meeting for the cultural festival held in November.

"Try and get us a space then?"

"I will."

If the knitting society could get a space then it would make recruiting members for next year easier, providing a chance to make sure their tiny society of two people wasn't overlooked.

"Satomi-kun… you're wearing those clothes so you're going to work?"

"That's right, while you're in the cool room having a meeting, I'll be working away under the sun."

"Fufufu, be careful not to collapse, okay?"

Harumi smiled slightly and waved her hands at him, blowing a wind towards him. It wasn't a great deal of wind but Harumi cute action refreshed him more than actual wind.

"I'm getting on much better with senpai too…"

In the beginning, when they were alone together Harumi was slightly nervous, but recently that nervousness had faded and gradually she started to show him bright smiles like this.

"Even if the student council room has air conditioning, you be careful too, Sakuraba-senpai."

"Thank you, Satomi-kun, whoops, I need to go now!"

"I should go too then."

"Work hard, Satomi-kun.:

“I will! See you next time!”

“See you next time, Satomi-kun!”

Koutarou and Harumi were both happy to see each other unexpectedly but the two of them both had work to do, so the two separated and headed towards their destinations.

“So, let’s go to work now!”

When Harumi had finally left their sight and they were alone again, Sanae returned to Koutarou’s back. Sanae had actually waited slightly away from them until Koutarou and Harumi had finished talking.

“My bad, sorry for making you fuss.”

“With what?”

“While Sakuraba-senpai was here you stayed back, didn’t you?”

Recently Sanae had been less reserved with Koutarou and held onto him most of the time. But there were occasions when she waited a little distance away like this. Sanae didn’t truly want to cause Koutarou trouble.

“Harumi helped us at the beach so I thought I’d stay out of the way for a while.”

“You’re thoughtful sometimes.”

Koutarou and Sanae’s argument was solved because of Harumi’s advice, Koutarou had told her this so she knew. In other words, being able to hold on to Koutarou was thanks to Harumi, so to show her thanks, when Koutarou and Harumi spoke, she’d be quiet and wait.

“You can tell I’m not an ungrateful evil spirit.”

“Then what are you?”

“You can call me Guardian Angel Sanae-chan.”

“I don’t quite get it, but it sounds strong.”

“Right?”

Continuing their light hearted conversation, the two of them walked along the path that went around the school. As Ruth said, the two of them did look like an older brother and his little sister.

The ruins atop the mountain by Kisshouharukaze High School were generally known as the Kisshouharukaze Ruins. The ground was being prepared for an institution related to Kisshouharukaze High School when the ruins appeared. Because of this, they were given the name of the school and came to be known as the Kisshouharukaze Ruins.

Their discovery was a great shock to the archaeological world because of all the apparently impossible artefacts that were excavated.

The objects themselves were plates and pots, nothing but commonplace items. Judging by how well they were made, the ruins should be from the Yayoi era. However, when they were scientifically dated, it was found they were made ten thousand years before. This was unbelievable, the Yayoi era was approximately two thousand years ago, but items with the same level of manufacturing skill had been found from ten thousand year old ruins. That meant a civilisation with skills eight thousand years ahead of their time had existed here. It was a huge discovery that overturned many theories that had existed until now.

It may have been a shocking discovery, but they needed hard proof. They couldn’t just re-write history without a proper excavation and investigation. So a large scale excavation of the site

began to make sure of the discovery. Thanks to that, more workers were needed and when searching for part time work, Koutarou became one of them.

The work was tough but paid well because of it. One day's work would easily earn a month's rent for room 106. It was close to the school too, so it was an easy place to work. Thanks to this, Koutarou could live off of his earnings. Being able to live without being a burden to his father was something that Koutarou was proud of.

"Koutarou, it's about time for a break."

"Hmm, it's already time?"

"Drink some tea, you'll collapse."

"Thanks, Sanae."

Koutarou took the canteen from Sanae and began drinking the barley tea inside it. Ruth's skill at Japanese style cooking was increasing and her barely tea had improved too. It was just like Koutarou liked it, fairly strong.

"The tea's good today too."

"I prefer it a bit weaker."

"If you don't like it, get off."

"No way, I want to drink too."

"What a selfish girl."

"Well I'm a girl… More importantly, Koutarou, the glasses-guy is coming."

"McKenzie?"

As Koutarou closed the lid on the barley tea he'd been drinking, his childhood friend, Matsudaira Kenji, appeared in the area he was working. He'd said he was going out somewhere today, so Koutarou knit his eyebrows in puzzlement.

"Kou!"

"Yo, McKenzie, I thought you weren't coming today?"

"I wasn't, but well, a lot of stuff happened."

"Don't tell me, you broke up again?"

Koutarou knew Kenji had plans with his girlfriend, and Kenji's personality meant that he wouldn't stand her up and go to work. So naturally, the possibility he'd broken up rose to the surface. It was a pattern even Koutarou understood.

"That's not the case… But nearly."

"You never learn your lesson…"

"You've never even gone out, so you wouldn't know!"

They were words that Kenji had just thought of as an excuse, but they resounded strangely to Koutarou.

"You wouldn't understand unless you've gone out, huh… That might be true…"

Koutarou glanced behind him to see Sanae floating nearby, waiting for them to finish talking and following a butterfly with her eyes. It was a charming scene, Koutarou felt this because of spending time and coming here with her. Koutarou's valuation of Sanae was very different from when they first met, and that was true to a certain extent for the other invaders too. That was

definitely – albeit slightly different from what Kenji meant – something he wouldn't have understood without going out with them.

"Talk before it gets weird."

"Okay, okay."

However, Koutarou and Kenji were exact opposites, with time, Koutarou made relationships, but with time, Kenji destroyed them, so Koutarou couldn't properly understand his feelings.

"So how many does that make it now?"

"You're not even past zero yet, so you can't talk, Kou!"

Koutarou and Kenji started excavating whilst arguing. Sanae watched them for a while, but gradually became bored and decided to go and walk around the area.

"Koutarou, Koutarou, I'm going to go look around over there."

"…Don't go too far so you don't get lost."

"Okay, I'm off!"

"…Sure, be careful."

Sanae made sure to tell Koutarou, and then went off to walk. But she didn't notice how naturally she did it, Koutarou was the same, but that was the change that had occurred between them in the past few months.

"Kou, did you say something?"

"No, nothing. Oh, an arrowhead."

Koutarou was working with Kenji, and Sanae was walking on her own, they were doing things separately, but the distance between their hearts wasn't as great as the actual distance between them.

Kenji had so easily told his sob story to use it as motivation to ask Koutarou something, even if it was Kenji asking he wouldn't easily get to the core of things with no reward.

"If we're talking about troubling stuff, Kou."

"Yeah?"

"…You're strangely not troubled."

For a moment, Kenji's kind disposition showed.

"How do you mean?"

"To tell the truth, when you started living on your own, I thought you'd go bad again."

Koutarou had lived with just his father. His mother had died in an accident when he was young. That had destroyed his home life, and it had taken a long time to build it back up. His childhood friend Kenji had seen that up close, so whilst he'd said various things when Koutarou started to live alone, he was actually worried about it. That was also why he'd taken every chance to tell Koutarou to get a girlfriend.

"Aah, that's what you mean."

Koutarou stopped working and smiled slightly.

To Koutarou, Kenji worrying about that wasn't strange, and because it was Kenji, he didn't find it unpleasant, he'd played a large role in fixing his life after it was destroyed.

"But… you've been the same as always. It made me slightly curious if everything was okay."

Kenji said that with a wry smile, he was glad that his worries were unfounded but was still curious. He wanted to know if there was a reason. It was proof of his friendship.

“Now that you mention it…”

Now that Kenji had pointed it out to him, Koutarou noticed he hadn’t felt lonely living alone.

“Why’s it like that…?”

Koutarou found it strange. The day he’d moved in, he had indeed felt lonely, no one was waiting for him there, and his voice echoed in the empty room.

However…

“I see, I might…”

If Koutarou went home, Kiriha would be in the kitchen preparing dinner, Ruth would be preparing tea. Theia would be engrossed in a game on the TV, Yurika would be sleeping in the wardrobe or reading manga. And Sanae would be riding on Koutarou’s back as always.

In other words, from the day after moving in, Koutarou hadn’t been alone since.

“So there is a reason?”

“It’s not quite a reason. I’m just busy everyday and if I go to school there are loads of people I get on well with at school, right? So I don’t feel lonely.”

Koutarou couldn’t directly say that though so he changed it so Kenji would understand. This was about the limit of how he could change it without it becoming a lie.

“Now that you mention it, you have been more sociable recently.”

But thankfully, Kenji accepted this answer and nodded deeply.

From Kenji’s point of view, Koutarou hadn’t just been being sociable with the boys, but with female students too. Theia and Ruth stood out, and there was the honour student Kiriha and Yurika who was nearly failing that he was sociable with, a large variety. He was also enthusiastic in the knitting society, so it looked like he did plenty at school to compensate for any loneliness at home.

“So you don’t need to worry, you should worry about your own girlfriend.”

“Is that anyway to talk to someone who worried for you!?”

“You’ve got bad habits.”

The atmosphere between them was serious for a while, but that was wiped out in an instant and the mood returned to normal.

“Then what about you Kou, there’s that many girls around you, isn’t there one you’re interested in?”

“There’s not.”

He denied it on the surface, but in Koutarou’s mind, several girls’ faces appeared.

Theia, always aggressive but also kind.

Ruth, always worrying about everyone.

Yurika, a cosplayer who didn’t think much and was irresponsible, but he couldn’t hate.

Kiriha, who he didn’t know what she was thinking, but he’d caught a glimpse of her deeper emotions.

Harumi, who was shy and kind and taught him knitting.

Shizuka, who looked after Corona House alone after inheriting it from her parents.

And-

“Koutarou, look, look! I caught a beetle! It’s huge!”

-Sanae, always energetic and smiling innocently.

Koutarou was interested in these seven girls. They were wrapped in complicated circumstances towards each other, so it might be too early to call them friends. But even so, it was true that they had stopped Koutarou from feeling lonely. They were people who Koutarou didn’t want to look away from for lots of reasons.

Sanae was chasing backwards and forwards after a butterfly when she saw a rhinoceros beetle and went to catch it. She could see spiritual waves and fly through the air, so no beetle could escape her. After catching it, she flew back to Koutarou at full speed and full of pride.

“Rhi-chan, ehehehe~.”

Full of satisfaction, Sanae returned to Koutarou’s back and put her captured beetle on his hat, watching it with a bright smile.

“Well done catching one so big.”

“It’s amazing, right?”

“Yeah, The earth’s bad around here, so I didn’t think there would be any so big.”

Rhinoceros beetles lived under the ground when they were larvae and preferred a certain level of humidity and humus in the ground. When they matured they left the ground and climbed trees, living off of their sap. So in open areas like the top of this mountain, there weren’t many around, there should be more living further down so Koutarou was honestly impressed that Sanae caught a large beetle like that in this kind of unsuitable area.

“That’s me, making the impossible possible.”

“Well done, well done.”

Koutarou would have normally rubbed Sanae’s head to praise her, but his hands were covered in mud from excavating so he lightly rubbed his head against hers instead.

“Nyahahaha, that tickles.”

“Tickle tickle.”

“You’ve done it now!”

Sanae started doing the same thing, it was only rubbing heads together, so it didn’t hurt, and if one of them wanted to stop, both would immediately. The two of them played like that for a while.

“…Kou, what are you doing?”

But to people who couldn’t see ghosts, Koutarou looked like he’d gone insane, so Kenji was worried the heat had gotten to him or something.

“N-nothing, I thought I had some mud on my head.”

“Oh, okay then, it’s hot, so watch it.”

Fortunately Kenji didn’t question it any further and returned to his own work.

“Geez.”

Koutarou brushed off his chest in relief.

“Tehehe, sorry.”

“It’s fine.”

Sanae apologised, but Koutarou wasn’t bothered, the two of them were just playing.

Then, because of the two of them moving so much and making noise, the beetle on Koutarou’s hat flew off.

“Oh no…”

Sanae watched the beetle fly off in disappointment, it flapped its wings and flew once around their heads before heading straight towards the trees. Its instincts telling it where to go to get home.

“Are you sure you want to let it go?”

Koutarou found Sanae letting it go strange, she could catch up to it and stop it getting away with her spiritual powers.

“Yeah, we can’t take Rhi-chan home with us, it wouldn’t be fair to get him tangled in our circumstances.”

“You’ve grown up, Sanae.”

“I think even kids can be grown up sometimes.”

“I think you’re right.”

Koutarou and Sanae had both become more grown up recently so they knew better than to just bring others into their circumstances, it wouldn’t be fair to keep it as a pet, or keep it there for no reason.

“If you’re proud then praise me properly.”

“Good girl, good girl.”

“Ehehehe~.”

“…Kou, seriously, are you alright?”

“I’m fine, there was an insect on my head so I was just chasing it off!”

The midsummer sun shone down on the beetle flying back to the trees, its wings flapped strongly and were full of life. It was a sight that had held beetles’ position as children’s idols for a long time thanks to both its strength and beauty.

“…He’s gone.”

“Yeah… Hey, Koutarou, do you think Rhi-chan has a family?”

“I think he does, I’m sure he’s got lots of brothers and sisters waiting for him in the trees.

“Right. I’m sure… he does.”

After Koutarou and Sanae watched the beetle until they couldn’t see it anymore, he returned to work, and for the rest of the day, Sanae didn’t leave his back.

When Koutarou and Sanae got to the road home, it was about six in the evening. It was the middle of summer so the sun hadn’t set and the surroundings were still bright. They headed towards Corona House as if they were pursuing the slowly setting sun.

“Koutarou, you really worked hard, right?”

“You can tell?”

“Yeah, recently I’ve been able to tell things like that about you, only when I’m holding on to you like this though.”

“That’s strange. Maybe it’s because you’ve practised or we’re not scared of each other or something…”

“I think it’s because be get on better now.”

“It’s embarrassing to admit that up front like that.”

“Because you’re a guy?”

“I’m glad you understand.”

“Ehehehe~.”

They carried on chatting as they walked down the road and eventually could see Corona House in the distance, it was far away so they could only see the roof, but that old fashioned design was unmistakably Corona House.

“Satomi-sama, Sanae-sama!”

The two of them heard a voice from nearby and turned around at the same time and saw Ruth running towards them with her arms full of shopping. Not far behind her were Theia and Kiriha, it looked like the three of them had gone shopping.

“You’re coming home too then?”

“Yeah, it’s already six after all.”

“Ruth, I made sure Koutarou drank the tea.”

“Thank you for you work, Sanae-sama.”

“Koutarou, you’ve got mud on your face.”

“It’s fine, you’ll get your handkerchief dirty.”

“I don’t mind, I’m doing the washing when we get home anyway.”

Now with five people, the group continued back to Corona House. The liveliness of the conversation increased with the number of people, it was especially noticeable because when it was just the two of them, Koutarou had had to keep his voice down to avoid looking suspicious.

“Koutarou, you can’t get tricked by Kiriha, I’m the only one you can believe!”

“I know, I’m fine.”

“How heartless, and after I was so loving too.”

Kiriha heaved a heartbroken sigh and looked away, before grabbing Koutarou and pressing his arm into her large chest. It was a lascivious act that would startle any man.

“W-why you, are you seriously doing this!?”

Koutarou too, lost himself to shock here, but he knew this was one of her techniques for the invasion, so he shook his head violently to shake out those thoughts.

“Satomi-sama, there’s also the chance you’ll become Her Highness’ retainer, so please restrain yourself.”

“It’s useless to just say it, he’s an idiot.”

“What was that!? I’ll remember that tonight!”

“That goes for me too!”

With Ruth’s intervention, Koutarou’s attention was drawn completely from Kiriha to Theia, making Kiriha’s psychological attack useless.

“Your Highness, Satomi-sama, calm down please, it will go as Kiriha-sama wishes if you stay like this.”

“That’s right Koutarou, if you lose it’d be bad for me because of our truce, so hang in there!”

“R-right.”

“I’m sorry, Ruth.”

Then, thanks to Ruth and Sanae the flames between Koutarou and Theia died down. In these months, the group had started to regain their balance.

“You don’t need to be that careful, I think of you all as friends.”

“If it was necessary, you’d be fine with defeating friends.”

“Well that’s true.”

“Why you…”

“Koutarou… You can’t really talk like that to a lovely maiden who’s holding you like this, can you?”

Her slightly adult smile had a charm that made him lose focus and drew him in, but Koutarou had a thought that put a stop to that.

“That card… and her story about her first love… I don’t think it was a lie… so what’s this for?”

On the night they all went to the beach, Kiriha had told him about her first love. He didn’t want to think of that as a lie so thought her seductive techniques were bad.

“Is she just teasing me? Or maybe… Argh, I don’t know!”

He couldn’t reach a conclusion and was utterly confused. If he asked her, she’d just smile at him and not answer. That he knew this showed that they were getting on well.

“…She’s got guts.”

“She’s a difficult opponent.”

Not knowing Koutarou’s worries, Sanae and Ruth looked harshly at her as a rival, other than Koutarou, all of the others still thought of Kiriha as just a rival.

“Even so… what’s with them…”

He’d reconciled with Sanae, talked with Kiriha about her first love, Ruth was always worrying about everyone and Yurika would no doubt be watching anime in room 106. In the beginning they were just enemies but now Koutarou couldn’t just call them enemies and a strange feeling began to blossom in his chest.

They returned to room 106 and saw Yurika's shoes scattered in the entrance way. Koutarou let out a small sigh and picked them up, entering the room.

"That's right! The culprit is one of these people, find out after the break!"

"Hmm, I don't know at all…"

Yurika was glued to the TV watching a detective anime she'd recorded yesterday. She hadn't noticed Koutarou enter the room at all and he hit her lightly on the back of the head.

"Ow!?"

"How many times do I have to tell you not to leave your shoes out like that?"

"Sa-Satomi-san, perfect timing! Who do you think the culprit is!?"

While rubbing her sore head, Yurika pointed several times at the TV, more concerned with her anime than the pain.

"You're not even listening."

"I am, don't tease me and tell me! Ow!? Why won't you tell me!?"

"…Whatever, I was stupid to expect anything different."

Koutarou dropped his shoulders and sat next to the table. He was tired from work so he didn't have the energy left to stay angry at Yurika.

"You can too Sanae, tell me who's the culprit please!"

"I haven't watched it yet, don't be unfair, think about it yourself."

"Eeeeeeehh-"

"I don't know, I don't know."

Sanae moved away from Yurika to Koutarou with a stunned face.

"She really is a troubling girl…"

"It's because you were too soft on her, Satomi Koutarou."

"It's my fault!?"

"She's a freeloader you're providing for, isn't she, you should at least teach her manners."

"She's not someone who would change just because other people said so!"

"Don't tease me and tell me, Satomi-san!"

When she came to the room she might have been a cosplayer, but you was serious. But day by day she became less serious, less responsible and lazier. As she became used to the environment, she showed more of her true self, this destroyed any credibility she had as a magical girl, but she herself hadn't noticed yet.

After dinner, they started playing a game as always, tonight's game was a card game that Koutarou had brought. It was a game about adventuring inside a cave, you lined up cards with paths and explored the cave, whoever came back with the most treasure won.

"It's my turn next. Uhm, I'll go this way."

Yurika flipped a path card face up, on it was a lizard baring its fangs.

"Let's see, let's see… 'Whilst you are adventuring, you are attacked by a huge, fire-breathing lizard. Roll a die and add the result to your attack power, if it's greater than seven, you win. If you win, take a treasure card, if you lose, either discard a treasure card or skip a turn.'"

There were monsters lying in wait in the cave, if you encountered one, you would roll a dice to decide if you won.

“Oooh, ooh, the sword I’m using has an attack power of four, so I only need three, it’s an easy win.”

“Wait, Yurika, I’m using this card.”

“Let’s see, let’s see… ‘You have neglected to maintain your weapon and it has rusted, minus one attack power.’ That’s just like Yurika.”

“Why are you being mean to me!?”

“Well it’s that kind of game.”

In this game, if you had disturbance cards in your hand, you could use them at various points in the game. The one Theia used was to make the roll more difficult for other players when they fought.

“Ah, I’ve got one too, here.”

“Let’s see… ‘You haven’t eaten enough and feel weak, minus one attack power.’ Nyahahahaha, that’s even more like Yurika.”

“Even you, Satomi-san!? Why is it just me!?”

“Well you’ve got the most treasure now.”

Obstructing the other players like this whilst you searched for treasure yourself was the main point of this game. If you were ahead you’d get hindered more, but if you weren’t, you wouldn’t win, choosing when to go out ahead was an extremely important tactic.

“So minus two overall, you need at least five.”

Kiriha summed up, from only needing three, she’d had two minus one cards used against her so she needed five on the die, it had suddenly got much harder.

“Uuuu, why does it…”

The others understood the rules and stopped favouring treasure acquisition around the mid-game and focussed on plotting out their hands, but Yurika didn’t think and still favoured treasure collection, entering first and drawing the others’ fire.

“Just roll the die, Yurika!”

“Uuuu…” On the verge of tears, Yurika picked up the die and appeared to pray, before rolling it across the table. “Pleeee~~aaase!”

Yurika was frantic, this die would decide her rank.

The dice rolled to the edge of the table and stopped.

“How unfortunate, Nijino Yurika.”

“Yurika’s been eaten by a huge, fire-breathing lizard.”

“Waah, I would have won if you didn’t get in the way~~.”

Unfortunately, it stopped on four, not the desperately needed five, so Yurika had to decide whether to discard a treasure card or skip a turn.

“So which will you do, Yurika?”

“…I’ll skip a turn.”

Yurika decided to skip a turn, after her long life of poverty, she hesitated to throw away treasure. But at this point, it was the wrong decision, if she discarded a treasure, then she wouldn't be aimed at and could finish without losing a turn with careful planning in the end game. Skipping a turn would only invite more hindrances and drive her into a worse situation.

"Then, it's my turn! Oops, before that, here you go, Yurika."

"What is it?"

"A disturbance card, 'Your wounds were deeper than first thought, you need an extra turn to recover, skip one more turn.'"

"H-how could youu~~~!?"

With yet another hindrance, Yurika definitely had no chance of winning.

When strategy was important, Yurika's results weren't good. They played the game four times, and in all of them, Yurika kept her low position. As a result, since spring when she had 180 points, Yurika's had fallen to near 100. It seemed clear that by Autumn she'd have lost 100 points.

"Don't be so sad, Yurika, I'm sure we'll find a game you're good at some day."

"Really, Satomi-san!? What game would I be good at!? Do you think I can be saved!?"

"I-I wouldn't say you can't be."

Koutarou pushed back Yurika as she came towards him crying, and wiped cold seat off of his forehead. Koutarou felt that there was little chance of her turning it around, she was already nearly a hundred points down on everyone else after all. But he felt awkward saying that to Yurika, he really couldn't hate her.

"The Neanderthal is right, Yurika. It's not the end yet, don't give up. Those that fight to the very end, ready to fight until they collapse, those are the ones who win in the end."

"Hmm, you say good things sometimes, Theia."

"You didn't need to add the 'sometimes!'"

"But Theia's right, you give up too early, Yurika."

"…Do I?"

"You do, do you want to make Sakuraba-senpai worry again?"

"Sakuraba-senpai… R-right, I'll try my best!"

When Yurika was unhappy, Harumi's name would make her energetic again. Harumi was someone who held a great deal of meaning to Yurika, you could say it was a sign of being human. And it was also a reason that Koutarou couldn't hate Yurika, Yurika respected Harumi a great deal, and was also important to Harumi, so when it came down to it, Koutarou couldn't be too harsh to her.

Whilst Koutarou was looking at Yurika with complicated feelings, Sanae who was floating next to him raised her hand in excitement.

"Right, right, everyone!"

"Hmm, what's up?"

"The game was interesting, so who don't we play again, but not for points? Ruth, Karama-chan and Koroma-chan can join in too."

"I can too?"

Ruth's eyes went wide at Sanae's unexpected suggestion, she'd not thought that she would play too. Sanae faced her and nodded energetically.

"Yeah, you know the rules from watching, right?"

"Well, essentially…"

Ruth nodded hesitantly, but didn't know if she should join in too.

"Let's go, ho-! We wanted to play too, ho-!"

"We know the rules too, ho-! It's a game where you get in Yurika-chan's way, ho-!"

"No it's not!"

"Ho?"

Compared to Ruth, the Haniwa were raring to go and used their short hands to start cutting the cards. The two of them looked like they were doing acrobatics.

"Your Highness."

"Yes… It's good to sometimes."

"Are you sure?"

"It's the same as when we went to the beach. Instead of just fighting, sometimes you need a rest too."

When she had won a hotel voucher in the tombola, everyone had gone to the sea in the name of a break. Theia had learnt the tolerance to allow things like that, to occasionally forget the conflict and relax.

"Then I'll play too."

"Right, right, that's good!"

"Whoo, ho-!"

"Everyone's playing, ho-!"

"Shouldn't we invite Shizuka too?"

When everyone had decided to play, Kiriha smiled and pointed at the ceiling. Shizuka had come with them to the sea, so Kiriha thought it would be nice to play with her too.

"I'll go invite her then!"

Without waiting for anyone else's agreement, Sanae flew up through the ceiling, because she could go through, it was convenient for inviting her.

"Kyaaaahh!? Sa-Sanae-chan!?"

"Ah, sorry."

After confirming it did seem like Sanae was actually telling her about the game, Koutarou dropped his gaze from the ceiling where it fell on Yurika who was making a face as she was deep in thought.

"What's wrong, Yurika?"

"Thinking about what should I do if even after there are more people, I still come in last…"

"You can't do that, try your best."

"But but, I think that if I lose now I won't be able to pull it back! So maybe I shouldn't play!"

Yurika threw herself towards him, sniffling, he used both hands and pushed her back down and soothed her.

“That again… It’s not for points, so if it’s only a little, you can ask me for help, so try your best, okay?”

“R-really!? I knew you were really a good person when we fist met!”

“That’s it, hang in there, right?”

“It’s okay, I already feel like I won.”

Koutarou was still worried about her future, especially with money, but he was happy to see her get her motivation back. She really was someone he couldn’t hate.

“I’m back!”

“Excuse me!”

Sanae’s and Shizuka’s voices sounded from the door. It was only down one flight of stairs to get here from Shizuka’s apartment but it had only been a short amount of time since Sanae had gone to invite her.

“Welcome, Shizuka-sama.”

“Good evening, everyone.”

“Good job, Sanae.”

“It was no problem.”

“That’s it, let’s challenge Ane-san, ho-!”

“Interesting, the student becomes the teacher, ho-!”

“Fufufu, that’s just what I want.”

“Let’s go then!”

“Wait a minute, teach me the rules!”

“I’ll aim for Shizuka-san.”

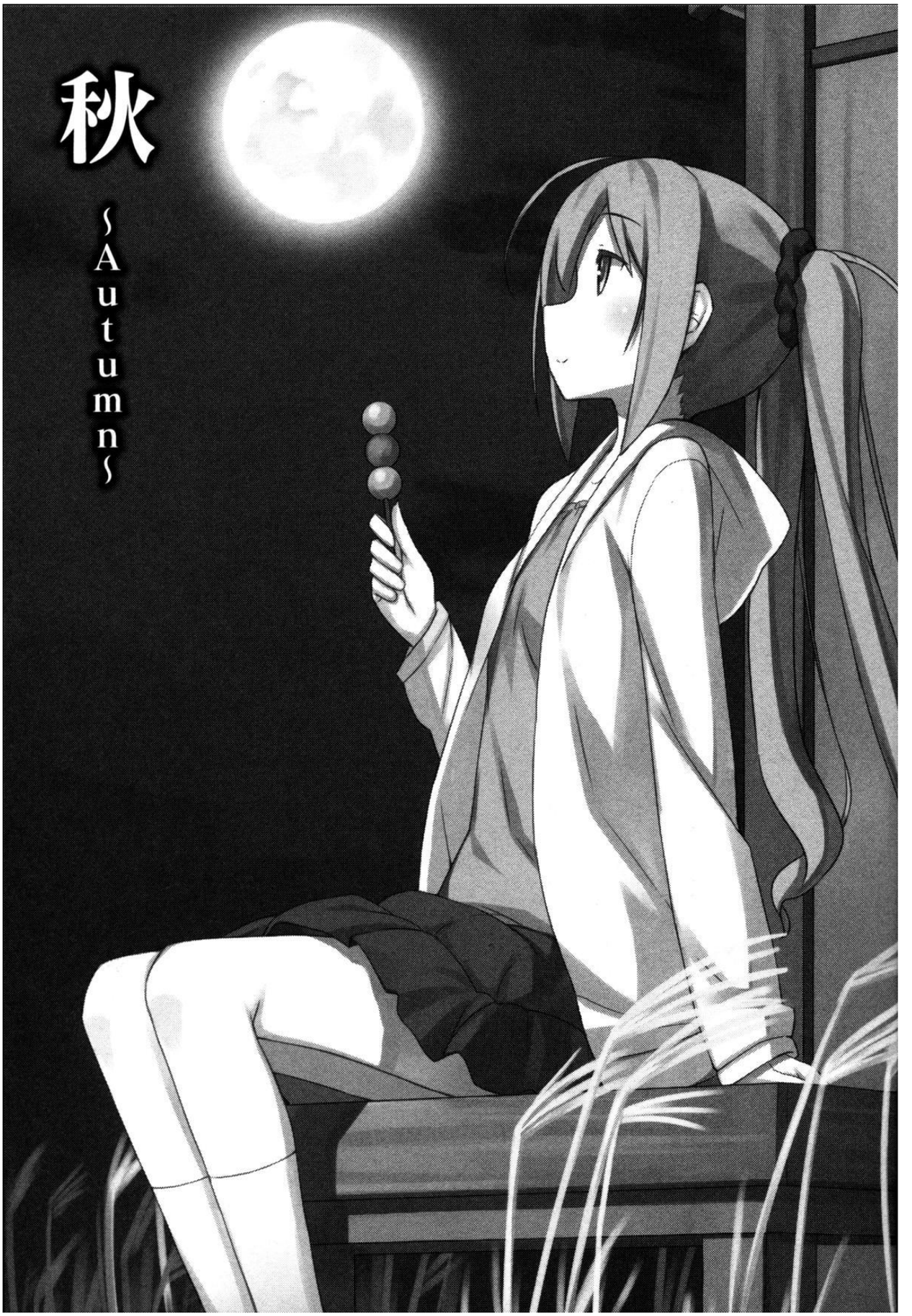
“Yurika, if you don’t think and just all out attack, then you’ll lose when the landlady isn’t here.”

“That’s not good!”

Finally the cards were dealt and the game began again. Those playing were Koutarou, the four invaders, Theia’s attendant Ruth, the landlady Shizuka and Karama and Koroma, nine in all. Originally it would have been unthinkable that they would all play together. But thanks to the days they’d spent together, they’d more or less learnt to cooperate.

“For better or worse, thanks to them, I haven’t been lonely living like this…”

Koutarou looked at the girls and remembered his conversation with Kenji at lunch. However, Koutarou wasn’t adult enough to admit his gratitude outright, so for now, he’d enjoy the card game as much as possible.


秋
~Autumn~

六畳間の侵略者!?

Autumn

The cultural festival had ended and the season had begun to feel like winter. The leaves on the trees were still turning red but the air had gone cold and in the morning their breath misted in front of them. But contrary to the cooling season, the relationships between Koutarou and the girls were only getting warmer.

“You’re ten years too early to beat me at this game, Theia!”

“Koutarou, you can only boast at times like this! I’ll show you who the true ruler is!”

Koutarou and Theia had tight grips on controllers and were mashing buttons, facing the TV. They had pulled an old game console out of the wardrobe and were in the middle of a race on it.

Following the play, they’d come to an understanding of each other and fought less over differences in opinion. However, when simply fighting in a game like this, things heated up. Wanting to win in competition was just what young people were like, it wasn’t because they hated their opponent. Rather, things heated up because they knew that the other would give them a challenge. For playing games, they were the perfect rivals.

“Do your best, Koutarou! Me getting more chocolate relies on you!”

“Don’t lose, Theia-chan, I don’t want my chocolate to be taken!”

Sanae and Yurika were supporting them, Sanae was cheering for Koutarou and Yurika for Theia. The two of them had bet their snacks on the outcome so the support had become more spirited.

“Your Highness, Satomi-sama, try your best!”

Ruth was supporting both of them. She understood that Theia and Koutarou were ideal rivals. Theia was a princess, so three weren’t many people she could clash with without ulterior motives. Through various circumstances, the enmity between the two of them had completely vanished. They might be arguing now, but that was because it was fun, and they were friends. Ruth understood that and watched over them with a smile. They might speak harshly to each other, and sometimes fight physically, but Ruth knew better than anybody that that was their playing.

“I’ve made tea and snacks, come and eat when you can take a break.”

“It’s chocolate, ho-!”

“Rice crackers too, ho-!”

Contrary to Ruth, Kiriha was on neither side. However, everyone at least vaguely knew that she didn’t like needless fighting and so had a strange feeling of trust towards her. The one with the strongest trust was Koutarou, he’d heard about her first love from her and understood her well. So Koutarou began to doubt. He began to doubt whether she really was here to invade the surface.

“There was a shortcut here!!”

“That’s why I left the brakes to the last minute!!”

In the narrow image from the old games console, the blocky tyres of the cars Koutarou and Theia were controlling squealed and slipped. However, the relationships between them all weren’t squealing like the tyres, they were starting to be more like the engines, smoothly working together without getting in each other’s way.

In the end, the race went to Theia. Koutarou had the lead, and in trying to lengthen it, went too fast into a corner and went off the course, in this game, it wasn’t a game over, but it did make

you lose several seconds. Theia had caught up in that time and taken the checkered flag and taken great delight in snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

“Hmph, even though you had the lead, you left slowing down too late and lost.”

“Theia, you don’t understand the romance of high speed cornering.”

“Romance is it? I guess it can’t be helped then.”

Up until now, Theia had been filled with triumph, but hearing the word romance, she nodded in understanding. Koutarou found it strange and wanted to know why.

“You left it surprisingly quickly.”

“Looking like this, I have an understanding of romance.”

“Do you?”

“If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have done the Blue Knight play, would I.”

“I guess so… here.”

Now that he knew, Koutarou offered his chocolate to Theia. If there was an honest understanding shown, losing didn’t feel that bad, so Koutarou didn’t feel much resistance to giving his chocolate to Theia.

“‘ank ‘ou.”

Without taking it from him, she started eating it. The chocolate had biscuit inside and she crunched up and down like a squirrel eating nuts.

“That’s bad manners, Theia.”

“Don’t be so up tight, I can eat the spoils of war as I wish.”

“Even so, Ruth-san has a scary expression.”

“Ahem.”

“I-I see, eating properly is better!”

Theia corrected her posture and began eating her own chocolate. Ruth was looking, so this time she made sure to eat properly.

“Why’d you give it up, Koutarou! Thanks to you, Yurika took my chocolate! And then you get your chocolate taken too…”

Sanae was dissatisfied with this result. Her plan was that Koutarou would win and have two pieces of chocolate and Sanae would get the extra that Yurika had bet and have two as well. Then she’d have Koutarou eat all four, so she could indulge in chocolate and have an amazing afternoon. However Koutarou had lost destroying her scheme so Sanae was venting her anger at him.

“You know, winning depends on your luck on the day.”

“Love towards Sanae-chan doesn’t change with time.”

“What’s that about?”

“It doesn’t matter, comfort me.”

“Sure sure, what a shame, what a shame.”

“More nobly.”

“It was an utter shame, my lady.”

“Ohohoho, very well.”

However, venting her anger didn’t take long. To Sanae, eating chocolate and playing with Koutarou were similar, and she’d returned to her good humour as they talked.

After mostly agreeing with what he said, Sanae went back to the console.

“Alright Yurika, now it’s our turn.”

“Ehhh, we’re playing?”

“Of course we are! I’m taking my chocolate back!”

“I’ll obviously lose, I don’t want to!”

Sanae was filled with motivation to play but her opponent, Yurika, held her sweets close and backed away, shaking her head.

“Koutarou, Koutarou, do something.”

“Yurika, if you do it, I’ll look over your homework.”

“I’ll do it! Compared to homework, one or two pieces of chocolate is cheap!”

In response to Koutarou’s bargaining, Yurika quickly returned to the console and the two of them started the racing game.

“… Koutarou, Yurika intends to get you to just tell her the answers.”

Kiriha had been drinking tea as she watched the progression of the conversation but now spoke to Koutarou. Rather than being shocked at what Yurika was doing, she was more interested in how Koutarou intended to respond.

“It’s fine.” Koutarou nodded, time after time, Yurika would pick the enjoyable option. So Koutarou knew that telling her he would look over her work was the same to her as telling her he’d give the answers. “For now we’ll start from getting the notebook open to do work. If she keeps on like this she might not make it to next year.”

Leaving her alone, Yurika wouldn’t do the work, that had happened over and over since spring and now she was in danger of not being able to become a second year.

He thought it might be good to leave her be and let her get what she deserved, but he somehow couldn’t just abandon her. He’d written the script with her and she’d protected Harumi from harm. So Koutarou thought he should give her some study habits.

“You’re a wise man, Koutarou.”

“If I left her alone and she failed, I wouldn’t be able to wake up, would I?”

“You’re kind, Satomi-sama.”

“That’s a good trend, just as a knight should be.”

“I don’t remember becoming a knight.”

“Ohohoho, first in form! Don’t worry about it, don’t worry about it!”

At some point, the mood in room 106 had become relaxed. In the months between spring an autumn, several big incidents had wrought changes in the hearts of the inhabitants.

Originally Koutarou just thought of refusing and eliminating the others. But now he didn’t thing that at all, and if he were to eliminate them, he’d do it from in front, fair and square. In short, he’d matured.

In room 106, the ones that watched anime were Sanae and Yurika, but there was an exception once a week. On Friday evenings, at half past five, there was an anime which two of the inhabitants were crazy about.

“Karama, it’s starting, ho-!”

“Wait, I’m coming, ho-!”

The two haniwa slid in front of the TV, and as if waiting for that moment, the anime’s title appeared on screen and its theme music began to play.

“Ho-.”

“Ho ho-.”

The haniwa had their eyes wide open and stared motionlessly at the TV, they looked forward to this every week.

The anime that they couldn’t help but love was called ‘GO Haniwamaru Yahoo!.’ It centred around a cutely designed haniwa prince, and was a weekly airing story aimed at children, full of friendship, dreams and adventure. It was a title that had been popular with children for a long time and had already been broadcasting for over twenty years.

“So cool, Prince Haniwamaru is our dream, ho-.”

“He’s the best, we need to become like that too, someday, ho-.”

The protagonist Haniwamaru was an energetic and cheerful boy. He was sometimes selfish, and failed, but he never forgot his friendship and courage, and stood up and faced whatever hardships came his way. On the occasions he couldn’t avoid drawing his sword, he showed peerless strength. On screen was Karama and Korama’s ideal image of a haniwa, the two of them loved Haniwamaru.

“And Haneena-chan is cute, ho-.”

“I want a wife like her too, ho-.”

There was another character that drew them in, the story’s heroine, Haneena, a haniwa girl. She sometimes appeared as a tragic heroine after being kidnapped by the bad guys, every time she was saved by Haniwamaru. Thanks to this Haniwamaru and Haneena had a loving relationship. It was aimed at children so the relationship was refreshing. But there were many fans who liked that, and there were by no means few adults that held them up as an ideal couple.

“Hey, hey, Karama-chan, Korama-chan, what’s good about Haneena-chan? Doesn’t that Dograska have a nicer body?”

“You don’t understand Sanae-chan, Haneena-chan is really kind, ho-.”

“Dograska has a bad personality. No matter how big her chest, or how slender her hips, that personality is awful, ho-!”

“Hmm, you place a lot of importance on personality.”

“We do, ho-!”

“What’s inside is important, ho-!”

“I-I see…”

Sanae still didn’t agree with the haniwa about her, but felt awkward stopping them from watching any more, so didn’t press the matter.

Koutarou was blankly watching the three that were watching the TV. Watching the three innocent people always made him happy. It was like watching over younger siblings, for Koutarou, who was an only child, it was enjoyable.

“Satomi-san, Satomi-san, what’s the answer to this one?”

The same thing could probably be said for Yurika. But rather than innocent, she was a needy younger sister. She was currently fighting with her kanji homework, but she’d tried to get most of the answers from Koutarou. Of course, Koutarou had no intention of giving them.

“Kyaa!?”

“Look it up yourself.”

Koutarou thumped down a kanji dictionary in front of her, the sound surprised her so she jumped back without thinking, but her characteristic laziness soon had her opposing Koutarou.

“Why are you mean to me!? Tell me please!”

“No, Do it yourself, I’ll teach you how to use the dictionary though.”

“It doesn’t matter. I’ll get Sakuraba-senpai to tell me.”

When she realised he absolutely wouldn’t, she gave up on asking Koutarou and decided to go and ask Harumi the next day. Harumi was stronger in academics than Koutarou so it should be more reliable.

“Wait, Yurika.”

Koutarou caught Yurika’s arm as she started tidying away her homework.

“Why?”

“When you’re really in trouble Sakuraba-senpai and I won’t always be around you know?”

Yurika was failing, if it continued like this, she’d have to redo first year. But of course, Koutarou would become a second year and Harumi would become a third year. Then Koutarou and Yurika’s curricula would differ, and Harumi would be preparing for exams. So if Yurika were to fail once, the possibility that she would fail for a second time was extremely high.

“Are you really okay with that? Are you that bad of a person?”

“Satomi-san…”

Yurika’s eyes went wide. She was expecting to be told off like usual. But what came out of Koutarou’s mouth were trusting words.

“That’s right, at the aquarium, Satomi-san…”

She remembered back to the other day, when she’d gone out with Koutarou, Harumi and Kenji. Koutarou had said he believed her. People who would risk their lives for others weren’t like that so Koutarou believed in her now. That when it really mattered, she could do well.

“I can’t let the people that believe in me down…”

There weren’t many people that believed in Yurika, Koutarou and Harumi were probably the only ones at the moment. If they continued spoiling her, she’d lose that trust. Yurika herself understood those pessimistic thoughts. It wasn’t as if she hadn’t grown at all over these months.

“I understand, I’ll try it.”

“Good luck, if you really can’t, I’ll help.”

“… Only when I really can’t?”

“Just shut up and do it!”

“R-right!”

Anger aside, she didn’t want to actually be disliked. Yurika opened the dictionary and frantically leafed through it.

“… Alright, I’m done.”

Then, next to Koutarou, Theia was doing the same homework and placed her pencil down before holding the work out to Koutarou.

“Koutarou, sorry, but would you tell me where I went wrong?”

“Sure, let’s see…”

Theia had seriously tried at the homework and asked properly, so Koutarou had no reason to be cruel, so took the paper and checked the answers.

“Yeah, there’s a few mistakes in here, Theia.”

“I knew it.”

Theia had asked him to check because she thought there were mistakes. She wasn’t talentless by any means, but being an alien, Japanese, especially kanji wasn’t something she’d completely mastered.

“First there’s this one.”

“Which?”

Theia moved closer and looked over the paper with him. As she did so, some of her hair fell onto the paper. Koutarou followed it up and found himself looking at her face. Doing so he found Theia’s face was closer than he thought and his breath caught.

“W-what?”

Noticing Koutarou’s gaze turn to her, Theia looked at Koutarou and noticed the same, her own breath catching before she looked slightly away. The two of them were paralysed like that for several seconds.

“…Well… Ufufufu…”

But Ruth’s laugh as she watched them freed them from their paralysis. With slightly jerky movements and awkward voices they continued with looking over the work.

“W-well, first is the character for rice, there’s an extra stroke here.”

“Isn’t it the s-same as the character for food?”

“Sometimes it’s, ah, abbreviated.”

“A-ah, right, I see, I’ll remember.”

They continued awkwardly like that for a while. Ruth couldn’t find it strange, but bit down on her smile, thinking of what they could be in the future.

It took about an hour after she opened the dictionary for Yurika to finish her homework. After doing things she wasn’t used to made her head feel like it had burst. So, buried amongst her answers, she collapsed onto the table, like a puppet that had its strings cut.

“I-I’m tired…”

“Well done, Yurika, would you like some tea?”

“Please, Kiriha-san.”

Kiriha began preparing tea for an exhausted Yurika. The hand on the clock had already reached seven in the evening so once she’d finished this, Kiriha intended to go and help Ruth with dinner in the kitchen.

“Um, um, Kiriha-san.”

“What is it?”

“Why do we have homework? Isn’t it easy to cheat nowadays?”

“Fufufu, that’s true. But there are people who think it’s better to go through life the harder way, without cheating. Homework is for those people.”

“Don’t you think it’s better to take the shortest route?”

“Yurika, the next time, the shortest route for you has changed, hasn’t it?”

“I…”

For this hour, thanks to Koutarou teaching her, she’d learnt how to use a kanji dictionary. So next time, if she had an issue, she wouldn’t have to go and ask Koutarou or Harumi to understand it, so it would take less time.

“That often happens when you take the longer route and do the work yourself. It’s longer this time, but next time it might become the shorter route.”

Yurika raised her head and looked at Kiriha. She was brewing tea, and speaking as if it wasn’t anything special but it was very important to Yurika.

“And when someone’s guiding you along the shortest route, you won’t remember the correct way, in the end you’ll have to ask next time. So overall continuing to rely on people for that will be the longer route.”

“The longer route… Relying on people will be the longer route…”

Yurika understood that. Earlier Koutarou had said that, when Yurika was really in trouble, Koutarou and Harumi wouldn’t always be with her. When she was in trouble, she wouldn’t always be able to ask Koutarou and Harumi for help.

“What’s important is to choose which longer route to take.”

“Which…”

Whether to take the shortest route now, and rely on other people.

Or to make the route shorter in future and purposely take the longer route.

When and where to take the longer way, that wasn't the only difference. And if Yurika didn't chose, failure was before her.

"When you look at a bomb, whether you think it explode because the fuse is still long or whether you put the fire out is up to you."

Yurika's fuse wasn't that long, if she was going to take the longer route, it would have to be now.

"Thank you, Kiriha-san. I'll think about it properly."

"That's good. This is your life."

"Right."

Just a little, Yurika thought about her future. It was only slightly, but that could be called an amazing growth. She felt gratitude to Kiriha, who had given her the advice that had become this chance.

"She really is…"

While they were going over her answers, Koutarou listened to their conversation, and his doubts grew. His doubts as to whether Kiriha really was here to invade the surface.

Her words didn't make it seem like she was. Her kindness, dislike of conflict and instantly helping when Sanae and Theia were in trouble. And now, her advice to Yurika. Leaving her be would get rid of a rival, so there was no need for her to actively help. Regardless, she had. Thus Koutarou's doubts gradually became convictions.

Today's dinner was deep fried food, and the smell had filled the room. Sanae was satisfied smelling it through Koutarou.

"Koutarou, this smell, it's definitely tonkatsu!"

"It looks that way, I'm looking forward to it, Kiriha's deep fried food is tasty."

"Ruth's has been good recently too."

"I like both! What about you, Koutarou?"

"Yeah."

Sanae shared Koutarou's senses, so their likes were fundamentally the same. The exceptions were tomatoes and green peppers, the memories Sanae herself had of the taste overwrote the information from Koutarou. Only in this case did their tastes not align. But this was an exception in the end.

"I don't mind as long as it's tasty. I think I'll take the chance to eat a lot."

"Well, it is high calorie."

Yurika intended to stuff herself with tonkatsu. It was a food she liked, but it was also a good source of nutrients, so she was taking the chance to eat plenty whilst she could. There were many times she had to go without lunch and malnutrition would mean being cold in the autumn and winter.

This was a time they talked about this and that.

"Koutarou, Koutarou!"

"We have a request. ho-!"

The two haniwa were rushing back and forth in front of Koutarou, and whilst jumping there, they earnestly appealed to him.

“We’ve got somewhere we want you to take us, ho-!”

“Where?”

“Sunrise Ninety, ho-! Apparently there’s a Haniwamaru exhibition there, ho-!”

“And you want to see it.”

“That’s right, we want you to take us, ho-!”

“Apparently there’s a life-size Prince Haniwamaru and Haneena-chan, ho-!”

“Can’t you just go? You can turn invisible and do in.”

“No! We’re proper fans, ho-!”

“We want to properly pay for the exhibition and goods. We’ll be regular users, ho-!”

“You really look up to him, don’t you.”

While saying that, Koutarou looked at Yurika. She was the one with the littlest awareness of copyright.

“But we can’t go on our own, it’d be an uproar, ho-!”

“So we need Anego and you! We’ll go in as your luggage, the plan is perfect ho-!”

Karama and Korama were devoted fans and wanted to go as proper customers. But real living haniwa would inevitably cause an uproar, so they’d selected Koutarou and Kiriha as dummy visitors.

“So please, ho-!”

“We’re asking you as a Japanese man, ho-!”

After finishing their explanation, the two looked up at him pleadingly. It was the first time they’d asked for something like this. That itself was proof of how much they admired Haniwamaru and Haneena.

“Well, sure. You’re always helping.”

Koutarou had been saved by the Haniwa many times. Koutarou didn’t mind repaying them like this.

“Yay! Thank you, Koutarou, ho-!”

“Anego, Koutarou said he’d come, ho-!”

“Sorry, Koutarou.”

Then, Kiriha came in, carrying a tray for dinner. As they’d guessed, it was tonkatsu.”

“This much is fine, it’s good sometimes.”

“Thank you, Koutarou.”

Kiriha smiled at him, she really treasured the haniwa and was honestly thankful for Koutarou’s words.

“Say, Koutarou, why don’t we all go?”

The one who suggested that was Shizuka, following Kiriha in, carrying the tableware. When things that took time like fried food were being cooked, Shizuka would often eat with room 106. Since the summer holiday, things had become much calmer.

“Everyone?”

“Yeah, Sunrise is near the city, right? I go shopping there sometimes. And on the way back we could go to Kisshou mountain and look at the autumn leaves.”

“I see, so that’s what it was.”

Going to town just for the Haniwamaru event was a waste, so they could go have fun at the same time, and if they were having fun, everyone should go. Shizuka’s plan was simple.

“Karama, Korama, what do you think?”

“We don’t mind ho-!”

“We want to play with everyone, ho-!”

The haniwa cheerfully agreed. The Haniwamaru exhibit wasn’t a large scale event, looking around wouldn’t take a few hours, even including the sale corner, an hour would probably be enough. The haniwa wanted to play lots, so Shizuka’s suggestion was just what they wanted.

“Alright, we can all occasionally play together.”

“I agree!”

Next to Koutarou, Sanae wholeheartedly approved.

“That’s good, Karama, Korama.”

“Let’s play a lot, ho-!”

“I’m looking forward to it, ho-!”

The two rushed around Kiriha.

“Hey, Ruth-san, near Sunrise, there’s some shops with the latest magazines.”

“Really, Shizuka-sama!? I’d really like to go!”

“By the way, Theia, Sunrise has a famous second hand game shop near it, there’s a mountain of old-“

“Show me! That’s our objective!”

“Um, um, can we invite Sakuraba-senpai too?”

“Sure! We like Harumi-chan, ho-!”

“We can’t let her see us, but we can do that, ho-!”

They had no objections to others coming to play. Everyone easily agreed to go out on their next day off.

After dinner, they began to decide what day they’d go on. Unusually, the leaders were the haniwa. They were the ones that brought this up, so naturally they were in a leadership position.

“Karama-chan, Korama-chan, Sakuraba-senpai said she could come on the phone.”

“Thank you, Yurika-chan, ho-!”

“Harumi-chan is coming too, ho-!”

“But is it alright for her to come? It’ll be bad if you’re seen, won’t it?”

“Even if Harumi-chan weren’t there, we’d have to be invisible, ho-.”

“Moving haniwa would draw attention, we don’t want to have more attention than Prince Haniwamaru, ho-!”

“I see, that’s true.”

While speaking with everyone the haniwa wrote down the plan on the back of the scattered newspapers. Who was coming, where they wanted to go and the route as well as deviations from the plan.

“I think it’s best to meet Prince Haniwamaru first, ho-!”

“We need to go to the shop while they still have stock, ho-!”

“Then we’ll do shopping next, are you looking forward to it, Ruth-san?”

“Yes, I’ll look at the magazines and prepare.”

“But Shizuka, going around all the places like that will take too long, won’t it? Aren’t we going to see the leave in the evening?”

“Hmm, that’s right…”

“Then what about this, after seeing Haniwamaru, everyone can do what they like until lunch.”

“That’s Ane-san! We’re doing that, ho-!”

“And after we all eat, we’re going to see the leaves.”

“I can go look at the baseball stuff, so I agree. After all, girls wouldn’t want to go into a baseball shop.”

“I want to go to an anime shop! Love Love Heart’s character song CD should be coming out!”

Guessing that the schedule was mostly sorted, Koutarou got up and went to the wardrobe. It was the daily routine that they’d play a game to determine control of room 106, so it was preparing for that.

“Everyone, what game are we playing tonight? It’s late so something like cards?”

Koutarou thought that cards was appropriate for today, they’d used up time sorting out going out, so playing cards, which they were all used to, would be best.

“Leave that for today! Let’s properly decide where we;re going!”

“That’s right, the second hand games are more important than the games right now!”

“Satomi-san, you’re escorting Sakuraba-senpai so don’t think about useless things, take this more seriously please!”

“Shizuka-sama, we can’t hold all of the luggage for all of this.”

“Fufufu, I think it’s fine if we have Satomi-kun carry it.”

“We’ll carry it, ho-.”

But the girls didn’t seem to be considering the game at all, their heads were full of thoughts on how to spend their day off and have fun.

“You guys…”

In response to their reaction, he stopped dumbfounded, with his eyes open wide. He found their reaction strange.

“What’s wrong, you look like you just saw a ghost.”

“Kiriha-san…”

“Is it strange, that no one is going to play?”

“Y-yeah…”

He nodded awkwardly in response. They were all gathered here because they wanted room 106. Even if it was temporarily skipping it, there was a large meaning behind it. That something had appeared that they were focussing more on than taking the room.

“It’s true, we’re abandoning what should be the most important thing to us, it’s strange. But, Koutarou, what about you? Do you think we need to play a game now?”

“…No, I think we can do it another time too.”

And more than anything, what had confused him was that he didn’t think there was a need to force a game. He only suggested a game because it was a daily habit, and daily schedules had a stronger meaning to him than most people, with him being sports-minded.

“It’s fine even if we don’t fight over the room.”

“That’s right. I… think the same.”

“Hey, Kiriha-san?

“Yes?”

“You really-“

“Koutarou, come here a second! Where do you want to go!?”

“That’s right, Koutarou, Kiriha, don’t just pretend to be unrelated, come over and join in! We can’t carry on.”

“Satomi-saan, make everyone let me go to the anime shop too!”

“He already has to carry three people’s bags.”

“Shizuka-sama, that’s a little…”

“Finally, we can meet Prince Haniwamaru, ho-.”

“We can buy Haneena goods too, ho-.”

“It looks like that’s how it it, let’s save the complicated stuff for later.”

“Indeed, let’s.”

With everyone agitated, Koutarou and Kiriha exchanged a small smile. Then Koutarou closed the wardrobe and returned to the table with Kiriha.

The cable car they were riding glided up the slope. There were many people who’d come to see the leaves, so there were many people riding the car, therefore the car shook. They were pushed back to back so it was an awkward situation.

“Thank you, Satomi-kun.”

“No worries, a club members job is to protect his leader.”

“Well… Satomi-kun…”

As they stepped down from the cable car, Harumi lowered her head to Koutarou. In the packed car he’d made sure she didn’t have too much weight put on her. Harumi’s body was weak, and they’d invited her out, so protecting her was what he thought he should do.

“Hm, this is fine.”

Theia, who was listening from nearby, ground her heal into his right foot, she wasn’t happy with Koutarou, who she planned to have serve her, just protecting Harumi.

“You bastard, are you asking for a fight?”

“There’s rave reviews and a special offer now!”

They quickly began glaring at each other and Koutarou's attention was focussed solely on Theia. Originally, Harumi would have been upset, but after her experiences with Koutarou in the play, she'd grown more confident and Yurika was wordlessly supporting her, so couldn't be like that.

"Do your best, Theiamillis-san!"

"See, Harumi is on my side."

"S-Sakuraba-senpai!?"

"Fufu, I'm sorry."

She couldn't directly act yet, but she could support Theia and change the topic. Harumi too, had grown a lot since spring.

After the group got off the car, they kept going up the slope for a while to ride a lift up to their destination.

They had come to look at the autumn leaves, and Kisshou mountain had a well maintained trail to climb the mountain easily. And with the cable car and lift, they reached the summit quickly. Thanks to this, regardless of age, everyone could enjoy the mountain and the area had been loved by the inhabitants for quite some time.

Koutarou was bringing up the rear. In his gaze were the backs of the girls. At the front were Theia and Harumi, the two had smiles, possibly talking about the play. Following on were Shizuka and Ruth, the two were gently smiling and looking up at the leaves around them. Behind them were Kiriha and Yurika. Yurika had just slipped and fallen and Kiriha was walking behind her, looking at the lump on her head. Yurika's face was tear streaked, but by looking at Kiriha's face, it was obviously nothing major.

"Today was fun, ho-."

"I'm happy, ho-."

"It's not over yet, we can still have fun."

"That's right, ho-."

"Let's climb to the top and watch the sunset, ho-."

"And after we can go to the tea shop on the summit! Let's enjoy it to the end, right, Koutarou!"

"Yeah. By the way, that tea shop is famous for its dango and konjac balls."

"Really!?"

"I'm looking forward to it, ho-!"

"Let's eat a lot, ho-!"

Then right at the back were Koutarou, the two haniwa and Sanae. Sanae and the haniwa couldn't talk near Harumi so they naturally tended to end up on the opposite side. Koutarou was walking at the back so they ended up all four of them walking together.

"So, what did you all thing of your Haniwamaru event?"

"I understand Prince Haniwamaru's greatness, someday we'll be like that, ho-!"

"Haneena-chan was cute, I want a wife like that, ho-!"

"By the way, I agree that Dograska is a bad person now."

"… Good overall then."

Koutarou nodded at their happiness and continued to watch the girls in front of them. To Koutarou, it wasn't just the three nearest him, he could see the happiness of all six girls in front of him. Slowly enjoying their autumn day off, everyone was satisfied.

"Just what are we doing…?"

From the beginning, Koutarou should have been fighting for room 106. But now, room 106 was empty and everyone had come out to play. The girls didn't appear as invaders at all. However you looked at it, they were normal teenage girls. Koutarou couldn't bring up ill-will in front of that. Rather, it was the opposite, Koutarou trusted the girls. If they were to take the room, it would be fair and square. And when they were troubled they would help each other. At some point, Koutarou and the girls had completely broken from being enemies.

"Do I seriously intend to kick them out…?"

Koutarou felt happy whilst watching their smiles, and was upset when he saw their faces troubled. So even if he gathered all the points, he might not kick them out. He'd be sad they wouldn't achieve their goals, and he wouldn't be able to see their smiles.

"What… do I want to do about them…?"

Koutarou asked himself. He'd been asking himself this often recently. But he could never answer and he chased himself around in circles with the question.

"Kiriha-san, have you ridden a lift before?"

"I've only ridden the one in the tunnel, so it's the first time I've ridden one with a view like this."

"Ruth-san and Theia's technology is too advanced, so you haven't, right?"

"That's not true, tourist attractions and places where the atmosphere is important use lifts."

"Satomi-kun!"

"Koutarou, hurry up, we're taking a picture!"

"Koutarou, everyone's waiting."

"I'm on my way."

"Sure."

"Ho-."

"Ho ho-."

Koutarou broke into a jog and Sanae and the haniwa followed him.

"There always like that, always waiting for me. They're invaders but… what are we really…?

Koutarou's worries were extremely complicated, so he would need a while longer to reach a conclusion.

冬
~Winter~

New Year's Eve had arrived, bringing a stillness to the area around Corona House. The people walking the streets had thinned out and the number of cars on the road had dropped steeply. The same was most likely true of other areas, there were few people who spent New Year's Eve as any other day. Most people spent it with their families, staying in the house.

The resident of room 106 would also normally spend it with his family. But this year his family, that being his bachelor father, were far away so he couldn't. They had plans to meet after the New Year, but to say he wasn't lonely would be a lie. Koutarou's mother had died early in his life, so family held great importance to him.

But fortunately, Koutarou wasn't alone. Instead of his family, in the room there were invaders. Thanks to them, his loneliness was packed away and his attention was drawn from it. It wasn't erased, but the invaders covered it, happily for Koutarou and he didn't intend to deny these feelings now.

"That's right, I haven't seen Yurika or Kiriha since this morning, did something happen?"

"Yurika's at an event with the Cosplay society."

"An event?"

"Yeah, it's the biggest anime and manga event in the country. I went there too, the day before yesterday but there were too many people, so I came back before I got there."

"Oh…"

From the 29th, Yurika had been with the Cosplay Society for the past three days. It was an event that encouraged cosplay and they had traditionally gone and cosplayed there. Sanae had heard about it from Yurika and thought it sounded interesting and gone on the first day, but the maelstrom of spiritual impressions from around a hundred thousand people had made her leave early. The amount of people was comparable to a battlefield.

"Kiriha-sama said she had a religious event she had to participate in on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. However, it shouldn't take too long and she'll be back this evening."

"Kiriha-san is the leader's daughter or something, so you'd know a lot about that, wouldn't you, Theia?"

"Yes, Forthorthe's New Year is a little later, but it's troublesome every year…"

Kiriha participated in the People of the Earth's religious ceremonies over the New Year period as the daughter of their leader. They were established ceremonies, close to that of Japanese shrines, sharing similar roots. Forthorthe too had similar ceremonies. Being brought up as a princess, Theia participated in many of them, so she knew how much work Kiriha was taking up.

"By the way, the landlady is at an end of year party with the Landlord's Association. She can't drink so she's coming back this evening."

"So it's only us for a while."

"It looks that way."

There were four who still remained in room 106, Koutarou, Sanae, Theia and Ruth. The others were out and would all return that evening.

"I thought we could do something if everyone was here, but this is good. Koutarou, we're doing special training for the play."

The play that Theia had written the script for, ‘The Silver Princess and the Blue Knight’ was a month away, and she wanted to use as much time as she could for practice. So today, with no one here was perfect for that.

“Eeeh!? It’s New Year’s Eve thooouuugh!?”

“I don’t care, at all. Forthorthe’s New Year is still to come.”

“Haven’t you heard ‘when in Rome, do as the Romans do!?’”

“I know at least that much. So, if you really don’t want to, we won’t. I think you need some special training, what do you think?”

Theia gazed earnestly into Koutarou’s eyes. There was a strong will in her eyes, but it didn’t give an oppressive impression like the day they met. If Koutarou actually said no, she honestly intended to back down. She now knew that a true ruler wouldn’t needlessly force matters.

“… L-let’s do it…”

It was the opposite response from before, but Theia hadn’t forced him, just seriously stated she thought he needed special training. Koutarou knew that he was inexperienced at acting so his refusal vanished and he agreed with Theia.

“I see, I’m glad you said that, Koutarou, thank you.”

Theia knew she was taking his holiday, so earnestly thanked him with a smile. The play held a great importance to her, so she was more grateful to him than those words and a smile.

“Koutarou, you’re just a sucker in the end. You could at least take New Year’s Eve off.”

Even whilst laughing at Koutarou, Sanae took out the script from his bag and held it to her chest. Contrary to her words, Sanae was fired up.

“There’s no other choice. If I’m useless, it’ll be trouble for everyone else, it’s not like it’s just for Theia.”

Theia and Sanae’s smiles made Koutarou shy, and he looked the other way, but he definitely meant the words he said. Koutarou was inexperienced and playing a lead role so could sour the whole play. In particular, it would cause issues for Harumi, who was his partner in this. To Koutarou, who’d sworn to his friends to make the play a success with them, this was something he wanted to avoid above all else.

“I don’t mind that, this play isn’t just for me, after all.” Said Theia, nodding deeply.

She seemed really happy. That was a knight’s chivalry. Rather, Koutarou’s motivation not being just going along with Theia’s selfishness made her happy.

Today’s special training was focussed on combat. There were many combat scenes in the second half, and Koutarou polishing his swordplay would vastly improve the performance. That, and it being New Year’s Eve, Theia thought it better to do something physical rather than mental.

Their special training often took place in the space ship, ‘The Blue Knight.’ That was the case today too, and they were inside a large room on the ship. The cameras in place made it easy to capture every angle and correct his form.

The part of his training partner was being played by Ruth, she was equipped with a sword and armour as she faced him. Theia needed to watch over and direct, so she was a little distance away, with Sanae floating at her side holding the script, watching them. Checking the overall flow was Sanae’s job.

“The sword’s long, so it’s hard to draw cleanly.”

“I can only say to get used to it, the traditional Forthorthean knight sword is that size.”

Theia's direction had started from drawing the sword and Ruth watched over them in silence.

"By the way, your arms are too short, so you can't, right?"

"Shut up, be quiet and do it!"

"Don't get angry, it's just a bit of playfulness."

"That's too mean, don't do that about what people find the most important!"

"Huh? The most important isn't your chest?"

"Why youuuuu!"

Theia was exceedingly picky, whilst they clashed occasionally, little by little, his acting solidified.

"I really do need to get Satomi-sama to become Her Highness' knight…"

Ruth watched their interactions and her desire to see Koutarou become Theia's knight strengthened all the more. To Ruth, his personality, and his relationship with Theia fulfilled all of the conditions for the perfect lord and retainer relationship. So she continued thinking of how to persuade him whilst waiting for her turn.

"Here, like this."

"Wait a minute… here, sort of like this?"

"That's right, don't rush too much at the end."

"About this fast?"

"Yes, that's fine. It's about time we moved on to actual combat. Ruth."

"Yes Your Highness. Good luck, Satomi-sama."

"Good look to you too, Ruth-san."

Her turn came up and Ruth stopped her thinking and lifted her weapon and faced Koutarou. She was still developing her sword skills, but the movements were exceptionally clean, one could say it was characteristic of the Pardomshiha family that had served the imperial family for generations.

"…Ruth could have been the Blue Knight."

"Ruth can't wear that armour."

"Theatre is complicated."

"That's part of the interest. It's different from film that you can touch up with all kinds of techniques."

"Thanks to that, I have work too."

"That's true, I'm counting on you, Sanae."

"Aye aye sir!"

Saluting to Theia, Sanae held the script and flew over to Koutarou, and whilst looking over the script, she began pointing out the starting locations and such for their first scene. She had the part of assistant director and audio direction type things.

"Ruth, you're part of the coup d'état army, so look meaner."

"Mean… I understand, I'll try."

"Koutarou, you attack her quickly, but everyone's in the middle of battle, so make sure to pay attention to your surroundings."

“Roger that.”

“We’re ready, Theia.”

“Alright, let’s try once first! Begin!”

After Sanae finished her directing, Koutarou and Ruth’s battle began. They started practising with a scene from the start of the play, it was a simple scene where Ruth, from the coup d’état army attacked with her sword, and Koutarou turned the blow aside and took her down. A perfect scene to start practice with. Theia silently watched their fight. They continued according to the script to the end of the fight and she nodded deeply, saying.

“Okay, that’s enough.”

“It looked good, didn’t it?”

“Yes, there aren’t any problems in general. It looks like the movements from the first time are still there.”

The play next month was the second half, the first half at the cultural festival had fight scenes too so Koutarou remembered those, making his movements cleaner than Theia had expected.

“So, shall we do the next scene?”

“No, we’re here already, so we’ll try and make this one even better.”

Seeing Koutarou’s movements had fulfilled Theia’s desire. Last time, the time limit had meant many cut corners, like how to deal with the hem of the cloak and how to hold the sword to show off the crest.

“If we keep focussing on this and that, we won’t make it in time.”

“Today was originally a holiday, so it’s fine to use some of it like this.”

“That’s fine then.”

“Fufu, you’re finally being honest.”

Theia laughed. She thought Koutarou would be opposed to it because it was troublesome.

“I said earlier, it’d cause everyone issues if I was useless.”

“That’s proof of your knighthood, just hearing you say those words shows there’s worth in continuing.”

“…”

Theia’s words, and her smile as she said them were as beautiful as a princess should be and Koutarou found himself looking at her, lost for words. Noticing his gaze and finding it strange, she blinked several times.

“What’s wrong?”

“A-ah, it’s nothing. So, where do we start?”

“Well, first…”

Fortunately, Theia’s attention was taken up with acting, so they finished without her noticing Koutarou’s fascination with her.

They finished their training as the stars were beginning to shine over Corona House. It being the middle of winter, this was around five in the evening. To Theia, the supreme ruler of training, it was a little early, but she decided that it being New Year’s, she’d let Koutarou take it easy.

“We’re back.”

Koutarou entered the room through the transport gate on the wall farthest inside, only to be greeted by the spread eagled form of Yurika on the floor.

“…Welcome back~~”

Yurika was utterly exhausted from the three day event, and even whilst answering Koutarou, she faced up at the ceiling. Thanks to her exhaustion, her bags with cosplay materials were discarded close to her.

“Koutarou, don’t stop! You’re blocking the way!”

“Uwah!?”

In the next instant, Theia had followed him out of the gate and pushed his back. Off balance, he reflexively took a step forward. Were Yurika’s face was.

“Kyaaaaa!?”

Suddenly seeing the sole of Koutarou’s foot appear in front of her eyes, she quickly rolled to the side.

Yurika avoided her fate and Koutarou’s foot came down heavily next to her face. Yurika had avoided the danger, but the heavy thump of Koutarou’s foot landing on the tatami mats sent a shiver racing down her spine.

“Satomi-san, what are you trying to do!? Even bullying has a limit doesn’t it!?”

Yurika whipped her tired body up and complained loudly to Koutarou. She’d thought her face was going to be stepped on and wanted to cry.

“What would you have done if you stepped on my face!? Would you have taken responsibility and made me your wife!?”

“C-calm down, Yurika! I’m sorry, but I didn’t do it on purpose, it was an accident!”

In response to Yurika’s angry look, he frantically apologised.

“…Really?”

However, even in the face of an apology, she turned a doubtful gaze on him. She’d had many bad experiences so she couldn’t simply believe it.

“What’s wrong?”

“Because you pushed me, I nearly stepped on Yurika’s face!”

“I see, I’m sorry.”

Theia came out from behind Koutarou and honestly apologised, she hadn’t thought that Yurika would be back.

“…Satomi-san really wasn’t bullying me?”

“That’s right, trust me.”

“It’s my fault, I’m sorry.”

“…Then, then, would you still make me your wife?”

“No. In that case I’d pick someone I’d actually trodden on.”

“Whhhyyy!?”

Thanks to Theia’s apology, her doubt towards Koutarou was taken care of, but her anger would remain for a while.

When Kiriha returned, Yurika was sitting away from the others who were drinking tea and staring at the wall.

“…S-someday, I’ll look back on today… I’ll be super beautiful and be able to cook… then, even if Satomi-san asks me to be his wife, I’ll tell him he’s too late…”

Half crying, and occasionally hitting the wall with her fist, Yurika was muttering. Kiriha thought it was strange for a moment but remembered similar happening many times before, so left her to the Haniwa and headed for the dining table.

“I’m back.”

“Welcome back, Kiriha.”

“Sanae, what’s wrong with Yurika?”

“Uhh, putting it simply, Koutarou didn’t treat her like a girl and she’s depressed.”

“She said he’s the enemy of women, ho-!”

“She’s demanding an apology and better treatment, ho-!”

“I see, I understand now.”

“Go ahead and drink, Kiriha.”

Theia placed a tea cup in front of her once she understood what had happened and Kiriha’s interest shifted from Yurika to the tea.

“Did you brew this, Theia-dono?”

“Yes, Ruth’s cooking.”

Said Theia, whilst looking towards the entrance, there, past the curtain was Ruth, preparing dinner. So Theia had brewed the tea.

“It tastes pretty good.”

“I’m not as good as Ruth, but I at least know how.”

“It’s always the same.”

“Hahaha, you’re not wrong.”

Kiriha brewed the best tea in room 106. That wasn’t just because she was born in underground Japan, it was due to being raised as a high class girl. It was the same for Theia, she knew very well how to brew Forthorthean black tea, so there weren’t any major problems for her to brew Japanese tea either.

For a while, she enjoyed her tea with Theia, but when she was about halfway through her cup, she noticed someone missing.

“Incidentally, where’s Koutarou? I can’t see him… is he working?”

“No, he’s in the kitchen.”

“Why’s he there?”

“Since you weren’t here, he’s helping Ruth. Ruth still has some things she doesn’t know about Japanese seasonings and such.”

Koutarou had grown up with only his father, so could mostly cook. Ruth’s speciality was cooking, but she was still leaning about Japanese cooking, so Koutarou’s advice was very helpful.

“Oh… isn’t that interesting. I think I’ll go and have a look.”

When Kiriha heard that Koutarou was helping with cooking, interest filled her, and with a smile on her face, stood and headed for the kitchen.

“I’m going too!”

Sanae was waiting impatiently for the cooking to be finished and went to where Koutarou was. She intended to share his senses when he tested the food and test it together with him.

“Ruth, Koutarou, how’s it…”

Passing through the curtain, Kiriha cheerfully called out to the pair of them, but her words were cut off part way through, the scene that greeted her taking her eyes.

“What is this feeling…”

What took Kiriha’s eyes was the sight of Koutarou holding a kitchen knife. It wasn’t anything particularly special, just cutting vegetables for a hot pot with a kitchen knife. He was fairly awkward, but still skilled for a male high school student.

“Why is this making me feel so nostalgic…?”

Kiriha felt a strong sense of deja vu, like she’d seen Koutarou cooking before. A long time ago.

“What’s wrong, why’d you suddenly stop?”

“Ah, it’s nothing.”

But seeing this scene long ago was impossible, so Kiriha put it aside as her own mistake, and then called out to them.

“Koutarou, Ruth.”

“Ah, you’re back, Kiriha-san.”

“Welcome back, Kiriha-sama.”

“I heard you were both cooking and came to see.”

“I wouldn’t quite call what I’m doing cooking, I’m just preparing things and taste testing.”

“You’re being modest, you’re a great help.”

“I’m looking forward to it, it’s hot pot?”

“Yeah, I figured it’d be hard to fail with hot pot, we could prepare the vegetables and stock and start once you got back.”

“A logical plan.”

Kiriha smiled and approached the saucepan, sniffing at the steam rising off of it. It smelled of tuna, konbu, sake, mirin and soy sauce. A success for hot pot stock by her reckoning.

“What’s it like?”

“No need to worry, it looks like dinner will be tasty.”

“Koutarou, Koutarou, let me try too!”

“The only things to try is vegetables, are you alright with raw chrysanthemums?”

“Feh, I don’t want that.”

“What a selfish girl.”

“Give a little service to the lovable Sanae-chan, don’t you have any compassion, Satomi Koutarou-kun?”

“That’s why I asked if you wanted vegetables.”

“That can’t be called service!”

Sanae unhappily puffed out her cheeks and pouted. Just as that happened, without a knock or ring of the bell, the door opened and Shizuka walked in completely naturally, having come back from the end of year party.

“I’m back! Everyone, I brought food, let’s all eat dinner together!”

“Good job, Shizuka!”

Shizuka had brought things that Sanae could try. The meetings were one thing, but an end of year party was beyond Shizuka with her being a minor because it was a drinking party with older men, so she’d taken part of the food and left early. The food was things like fries and kebabs, with many things served with drinks, all foods that Sanae liked.

“Please, Shizuka!”

“Sure, here.”

Shizuka handed over the plastic box of food with a smile and Sanae used her spiritual abilities to fly it through the air to Koutarou.

“Koutarou, Koutarou, let me try, let me try!”

“Sure, sure, I get it.”

Sanae had completely forgotten her dissatisfaction with Koutarou and clung to his back. The lid opened by itself in front of Koutarou. No matter how someone looked at it, it was spiritual influence, but it just brought a smile to the inhabitants of room 106.

“What do you want?”

“A fry that isn’t soggy.”

“You really like fried foods.”

“Nufufufu, I’m a kid after all!”

While putting fries in his mouth, he carried the box into the main room with Sanae, eyes sparkling, holding onto his back. The flavour was exactly as she hoped.

“…You know, sometimes, don’t you think their relationship is too good.”

Shizuka watched them as they left and she went to the kitchen where she was greeted by Ruth’s smile.

“I think so too sometimes. I’m an only child so I’d like that kind of sibling relationship.”

“I know, right!?”

“Yes, it makes me envious.”

Shizuka and Ruth both had lifestyles where it was hard to feel the bonds of family. Just that gave them a strong yearning for a relationship like Koutarou and Sanae’s. That was a common feeling to the girls in room 106.

“There’s no need to be jealous from afar. You can actively join in.”

Kiriha put out the hob and picked up the hot pot and entered the main room. Kiriha, Shizuka and Ruth had similar feelings. However, Kiriha had already arrived at an answer, so she wasn’t jealous.

“Fufu… that’s true.”

“That’s right, let’s do that.”

Shizuka and Ruth thought that Kiriha's thinking was appropriate and followed with cutlery.

Placing the hot pot on a portable stove on the table and lighting it, Kiriha was in charge of it. She was the one who was originally in charge of cooking and her skill was undoubted. Following the heat and flavour, ingredients were added to the pot in order.

"Kiriha-san, Kiriha-san, the meat, is the meat done yet!?"

"Wait Yurika, it needs to boil first."

"Then, then, when will the fish be done!?"

"I know you want to eat, but that's later too. The meat and fish both need it to be boiling."

"Eeeehhhhhhhh."

"Satomi-kun, give Yurika-chan something."

It felt like Yurika was drooling over the meat, having a bad feeling, Shizuka asked Koutarou for help.

"Alright… Yurika, sit there."

"R-right."

Yurika instinctively followed Koutarou's abrupt order, and quickly re-seated herself on a cushion.

"Your hand."

"Right."

Yurika put her hand in Koutarou's extended hand. Yurika had followed the mostly meaningless orders but finally became curious about why and turned a questioning look at Koutarou.

"What's this for?"

"As a reward for your performance, eat this."

Koutarou took a plate out from the box that Shizuka had brought home and placed it in front of Yurika.

"I caaan!? Thank yoooo~~uuuu!"

Without waiting for an actual response, she began eating. She was like lightning at times like this, stuffing meatballs and fried egg whites into her mouth. Oily, salty foods like these were her absolute favourite.

"Impressive, Satomi-kun."

Shizuka nodded in satisfaction, watching Yurika greedily eat the party food.

"Don't you think that's spoiling her a little much?"

On the contrary, Theia was making a bitter expression, she wasn't particularly fussy about manners, but thought Yurika's behaviour was a problem as a girl.

"I nearly stepped on her early, so I'll let it go a bit, besides, it's New Year's Eve."

Koutarou thought it was too spoiling too, but didn't think it was worth punishing her for because it was New Year's Eve. He knew the kind of personality she had inside, so found it hard to be too strict on her.

"Satomi-sama is kind."

"He's always losing out because of it."

Ruth and Kiriha knew how he really felt, so saw his paying lip service as slightly strange and couldn't help but smile and look at each other.

"Koutarou, Koutarou, make sure to spoil me plenty too."

Sanae was envious of Yurika eating the party food and grabbed on to Koutarou's back. But Koutarou shook his head.

"You tried some earlier, wait until the hot pot is done."

"Hmph."

Sanae puffed her cheeks up and began to complain at him.

"You cheapskate, serious, Japanese man!"

"Sanae, decide if you're insulting or praising."

"You Japanese man!"

"Praising then."

"I decided there were more times we got along."

"Sure, sure, you really can't be helped."

"Ehehehehe~~~"

In the end, Koutarou was beaten down and reached out for food as she wanted. She put her arms around his neck and held on tighter, eagerly waiting for Koutarou to eat.

“Ah, but you don’t need to eat too much, if you ate lots, you wouldn’t have room for the hot pot, would you?”

“You’re so demanding.”

“It’s fine, isn’t it? You’ll let it go because it’s New Year’s Eve, right? …Ah, I want a cheese spring roll next!”

“Sure, sure.”

Koutarou ate what Sanae pointed out and Ruth, Shizuka and Kiriha watched the cheerful scene with smiles.

“I really am jealous of them.”

“Me too… It’s not something me can really do…”

“That’s not true, I think I’ll actively participate too.”

Saying that, Kiriha closed her eyes slightly and called out to Koutarou.

“Satomi Koutarou, feed me too. My hands are full and I can’t eat.”

“I refuse.”

“That’s right, Koutarou! Just provide me with food!”

“How cold, Koutarou. Don’t you like me?”

“You just think it’d be amusing!”

“No, I’m loving you.”

“Liar!”

“…You’re becoming gradually harsher, Koutarou.”

“It’s because you won’t leave it!”

“Well said Koutarou! That’s why you’re a Japanese man.”

Kiriha always simply inserted herself into their conversations. Watching them, Shizuka and Ruth looked at each other.

“…It’d be good to be like that too.”

“That’s Kiriha-sama, she really understands us all.”

“Shall we try too?”

“Yes. It seems fairly inappropriate, but it’s New Year’s Eve today and it’ll be the New Year soon.”

The two of them nodded to each other and jumped into their conversation.

About an hour after they started to eat, the first to put their chopsticks down was Theia.

“That was delicious.”

Due to how active she was, Theia ate a lot of food to replace her energy. But she was small, so that amount had a limit. Thanks to that there was a large difference between her and Yurika, who ate the most. Yurika still hadn’t eaten nearly enough.

“You’re already finished?”

“I’ll ruin my fitness if I eat more than this.”

“Tomorrows a holiday, so isn’t that fine?”

“I’ve got practice for the play.”

“I see, I can eat a little more.”

After exchanging a word or two with Theia, Yurika turned back to her food. She’d take as much nutrition as she could to prepare for danger. That was Yurika’s life wisdom from living self-indulgently in the merciless jungle known as modern society.

In her place, Ruth struck up a conversation with Theia.

“How was it, Your Highness.”

Ruth gave a smile as she offered a cup of tea to Theia, who took it and nodded deeply with her own smile.

“It was well done, Ruth, perfect for cold days like today. I should praise Koutarou too.”

“You should just praise Ruth-san and Kiriha-san, I didn’t do much.”

“If you insist on others being credited for your highs and lows, as someone who stands above, I’ll have to scold you.”

“Uh.”

“You should be proud, right?”

On Christmas night, Koutarou had told her to be prouder. She was kind and considerate, but there were times she could be proud as a member of the imperial family. Theia had taken it a step further and realised that it was the same as doing something for many people. Koutarou had helped for other people, so he should be proud. Being overconfident would be a problem, but never being proud was strange, it’d be the same as denying what other people worked hard at.

“…I’m honoured to receive your praise, Princess.”

“That’s good.”

Theia nodded in satisfaction.

“I really don’t think working for Theia now would be so bad now…”

Looking at her smile, Koutarou re-confirmed his feelings. It was too soon after the underground problem, but Koutarou didn’t really feel any resistance to becoming Theia’s vassal.

“Hey, are you already finished, Koutarou?”

But Sanae looking into his face stopped those thoughts as he returned a smile and shook his head.

“No, it’s not over until we’ve eaten the udon at the end.”

“They’re tasty, they should just be plain udon, but they feel slightly different.”

“Koutarou, instead of just udon, I made soba.”

“I see, New Year Soba then.”

“Shizuka, what’s New Year Soba?”

“Their traditionally eaten on New Year’s night in Japan, does your country have something similar?”

“We do, we eat unleavened bread.”

“It’s said that because bakers had the day off too, they made unleavened bread which would last a long time.”

“Oh… That’s interesting.”

“So what do we do, have udon or soba?”

Kiriha looked at the bags of prepared udon and soba. Udon was definitely more suited to hot pot, but a soba based soup was definitely no mistake for a New Year’s Eve soup.

“I’m fine with soba, your traditions are interesting.”

Theia had said she was finished but thought of this as participating in an event. She’d also made sure not to stuff herself, so she still had some room.

“I prefer udon, but if Theia wants soba then that’s fine, we can have hot pot again and have udon then.”

“I don’t mind which as long as I can eat it.”

“What about you, Shizuka-sama?”

“I… well, we may as well have soba. These lively New Year’s aren’t- whoops. Anyway, one vote for soba!”

It had been a while since Shizuka had had a lively New Year’s Eve like this. She’d lost both of her parents so not just New Year’s Eve, but seasonal events were for others, it had been quite a long time since she’d participated like this. But saying that would obviously dampen the mood, so she quickly stopped herself.

“Koutarou, what about you.”

“I’m fine with soba. I’m not Sanae, but lets have hot pot again soon.”

“Okay, soba it is then.”

However, everyone in the room was similar to Shizuka. Koutarou lived with only his father and he was a bachelor. Kiriha had a similar background to Koutarou, but she was away from home. Sanae was waiting here for her parents. Theia didn’t have a father and Ruth and Yurika had been away from their families for a while. All of them wanted a family’s warmth and somewhere to belong so all of them could imagine what Shizuka didn’t say and purposefully left it alone.

After they finished eating the soba, they were all spending their time as they pleased, watching TV, reading manga, doing their homework, drinking tea and reading the script, they were doing a wide variety of things.

“Hey, Koutarou, why do they get spanked if they laugh?”

“It’s a game where they have to avoid laughing.”

“Hmm, that’s a strange game.”

“Yurika-chan, do you have any manga you’d recommend, I’ve got time in the holiday so I thought I should read something.”

“Then, I’d recommend this space epic.”

“Hmm… that seems strange…”

“Kiriha-sama, what does this idiom with ‘horse’ mean?”

“That means mutual understanding, it comes from the understanding needed between a horse and rider.”

“I see… Thank you, Kiriha-sama.”

“By the way, Ruth, would you like some tea?”

“I would.”

“Could I have some too?”

“I’ll make some.”

“Thank you. Hmm… should I cure this scene I wonder… It’s fairly verbose, but… no no, if I cut it, it won’t fit together afterwards… hmmmm…”

Today was New Year’s Eve so there wasn’t a game for control of the room. Tomorrow they’d be playing karuta and sugoroku anyway, so they’d decided that was fine. So everyone should be able to go to their own rooms and be able to do what they wanted with the extra space or go to sleep. But strangely, no one had left, all of them thought that going alone to their own rooms would be boring and everyone had stayed in this room.

“Yurika, are you doing your homework?”

“I-I am!”

“That’s fine then. You don’t have much time, so be careful, right?”

“I will! I’ll do my best!”

“Sanae-chan, how much has she actually done?”

“None.”

“…If Satomi-kun weren’t here, you really would be helpless, Yurika-chan.”

“Yurika relies too much on others.”

“So does everyone compared to you, Your Highness.”

“That’s not true, I do rely on people.”

“I know, especially recently.”

“Ane-san, we brought rice crackers, ho-!”

“We want to eat too, ho-!”

“That’s fine.”

“Yay, ho-!”

“Anego is so generous, ho-!”

“I’ll eat too.”

The events that had happened with everyone gathered in the room could be said to have lead to strange feelings. They were all enemies, or when they weren’t it was only in the face of trouble. They all had reasons to drive each other out, and had no reason to be together. Despite that, in this instant, none of them wanted to drive the others off, rather they wanted to avoid this. They found being together fun.

Everyone knew how it felt to be lonely, and it was ironic that the people who compensated for that loneliness were enemies. But they’d already overcome that reality of being enemies. They originally gathered in room 106 to fight, but now they fought to gather in room 106. Everyone wanted these days to continue for a long time.

“By the way, Koutarou, what are you doing?”

“Landlady… I’m picking out games for next year.”

Koutarou had several board and card games he’d borrowed from friends in front of him and was wracking his brains. They’d be playing the characteristic New Year’s games, but the first game

was Koutarou's choice. He'd figured that he may as well pick a fun one, though this way of thinking was already strange, and was testing the games.

"We could actually try one, not for points, but just because everyone's free?"

"I agree, just binge-reading manga is a waste."

"Let's do it, Ruth, Shizuka, Karama-chan and Korama-chan can join in too!"

Yurika and Sanae both immediately agreed to Shizuka's proposal. Yurika because she hadn't touched her homework and wanted to avoid being asked about it, and Sanae because she was simply tired of just watching TV. The two of them came to the table and started choosing a game with Koutarou.

"A change of pace would be good, I'll join in too."

"The same for me, I was getting bored."

No one disagreed, Theia closed the script and Kiriha prepared tea for everyone and they all got ready to choose.

"Ruth, you're here."

"Is that alright?"

"It's fine, it's fine, Karama-chan and Korama-chan are with me."

"Ho-! We'll do our best, ho-!"

"We'll show everyone what we're made of, ho-!"

Ruth had some hesitation, but joined the ring with the Haniwa. In the end there were nine people around the table. Sanae was a ghost so had no substance and the Haniwa were extremely small so it didn't feel cramped.

"So, Koutarou, what shall we start with?"

"Let's do them all in order. First is… this one."

They started the game. The night was long and they had a wide variety of games and time passed slowly. It was a cold winter's day, but everyone's hearts felt like they bathed in the sun.

"Hey, Karama, Korama, will you buy ore mining rights with me?"

"I'm in, a mountain of gold is a man's romance!"

"Alright, we'll split the profits equally."

"Koutarou, you're making an evil face, ho-!"

"Kiriha-saan, what do we do now they're doing that?"

"Right, we'll buy oil drilling rights."

"Ah, when did you draw that card, Kiriha!?"

"I'll invest in oil, I can't let Satomi-kun win like that!"

"Your Highness, what will we do?"

"Fufun, we'll invest in both and use our rights as shareholders!"

This was a truly strange situation. There was a game being played, but points for territory weren't moving. In other words, this was meaningless, and everyone was performing these meaningless acts. So they all pretended, and couldn't say it honestly, but everyone understood, so no one pointed out that the game was meaningless.

六畳間の侵略者!?

As the New Year was rang in, they'd just finished their third game. It was a good stopping point so they stopped playing and went out to the shrine. Ordinarily they would have gone to sleep by now, but today was special.

"A festival, a festival♪"

Sanae was flying ahead of the group. She couldn't help but be happy and sometimes glanced back, the profile of her smile visible. On the other hand, Koutarou was slightly worried.

"Hey, Sanae."

"Yeah?"

"Are you okay going into shrines and stuff?"

"Why?"

"Why you ask, you're a ghost right?"

He was worried about her passing on. Sanae was essentially a ghost, in movies and manga, frequently evil spirits couldn't enter holy places without moving on.

"Oh yeah. But it'll be fine, I'll run away if it looks bad."

"Be careful."

"I will, thank you for worrying♪"

"Yeah…"

Sanae smiled and flew around him several times before flying back to the slightly slower girls, leaving Koutarou and Kiriha next to him behind.

"Koutarou, you don't need to worry. Her spiritual energy is stabilising. Even if it was a shrine with a deity, they probably wouldn't erase her, they don't erase guardian spirits. And even if they tried, Karama and Korama would protect her with a spiritual field, there's no problem."

Kiriha thought Koutarou was still worried about Sanae so told him her own counter-measures. Kiriha was worried too and had put the haniwa near her to protect her.

"That's true but… I just think it's a little strange."

"Strange?"

"Yeah, we're both worried about Sanae, and I'm sure the others are too, I think it's strange."

Koutarou gave a wry smile and feelings asking him what he was doing swirled in his chest.

"That's true. Considering our reason for gathering in room 106, it is strange."

Kiriha agreed and closed her eyes slightly with a pleasant smile.

"Your original objective was never to invade, so maybe it's natural."

"Saying that, you and everyone else are the same. We certainly were enemies, but to invade wasn't our objective."

"…That's right."

Koutarou wanted to ease his burden on his father, Kiriha wanted to meet her first love again and to raise the underground people to the surface peacefully. Theia wanted to support her mother, Sanae wanted to meet her parents again, Yurika said it was for her benefactor. None of them strictly speaking wanted room 106 itself, and they didn't hate each other. Continuing to progress their understanding of each other, it might have been fate they ended up like this.

"Even so, it's strange."

“Yes, I think so too.”

Koutarou and Kiriha exchanged smiles. Those smiles had a hint of bitterness because they both thought that their relationship with everyone was strange.

“Satomi-kun, isn’t that McKenzie-kun and Sakuraba-senpai?”

Shizuka stepped forward from the others and pointed out Kenji and Harumi. The two looked like they’d met by chance and were bowing to each other.

“…McKenzie-kun is with another girl again.”

“Landlady, that’s his younger sister Kin-chan. Matsudaira Kotori, shortened to McKinley.”

“It looks like Harumi came with her family.”

“Sakuraba-senpaaai!”

“Yurika, don’t shout like that in the night!”

“Auuu, s-sorryyyy.”

As they got closer, Kenji and Harumi noticed them and walked towards them and, ever polite, Harumi bowed deeply and Kenji bowed too.

“Everyone, happy New Year.”

“Y-you too.”

The two bowed and the girls started exchanging greetings. Up first was Kiriha, the one with the most formal manners.

“Happy New Year.”

Kiriha had just as polite a greeting as Harumi and the rest continued on in turn.

“Happy New Year’s!”

“Let’s have a good year this year, you two.”

“Have a good New Year.”

“Happy New Year, Harumi-sama, McKenzie-sama.”

They weren’t as polite as Kiriha but were properly welcoming to Harumi and Kenji.

“Happy New Year!”

“Congratulations, ho-!”

“Congrats, ho-!”

The three who they couldn’t see also did the same and smiled at them.

“Congratulations is it…?”

Koutarou watched over them, his conversation with Kiriha still on his mind. So he found these greetings strange, they themselves were to Harumi and Kenji, but it was clear that the emotions weren’t just to them.

After joining up together, the girls surrounded Kotori and began barraging her with questions. Everyone was interested in what kind of person she was.

“…Looks like Kin-chan is in trouble, you should help her a little more, McKenzie.”

“Kou, do it yourself if you think she needs it.”

“If I did it, they’d definitely complain.”

"…So you're telling me to do it?"

"Yeah, your sister's in trouble, McKenzie-oniisan."

The combined group headed to the shrine as originally planned. Koutarou and Kenji brought up the rear, watching over the girls ahead of them. They knew to leave girls alone at times like this, and at the same time, they could talk as if it were just them, a unique chance.

"Geez… But you know, Kou."

Here, the aggressiveness left his words and he had a small smile. Different form his usual smile, it seemed kinder.

"Yeah?"

"Looking at those girls, I can see why you're cheerful, even when it's just you."

"McKenzie…"

"It's a good trend, right. You always seem to push people away at the last moment."

Kenji had two worries. His introverted and ignorant to the ways of the world sister, and Koutarou, who didn't really socialise. Both of them needed a strong push to get going, so the girls could be called suitable for that.

"They're a big help."

"That's a good thing."

"…"

There weren't any people who knew how Koutarou had grown up and his family background as well as Kenji. So when Kenji was seriously worried, there were many occasions that Koutarou wouldn't reply, this was certainly one of those occasions.

"Kou, look after them. There aren't many people who know how good you are."

"…Yeah, I know."

"That's good then."

The two of them were silent for a while. It was a particular mood, because they were childhood friends. The one exception to Koutarou, was definitely Kenji.

"By the way, which one do you like?"

"Why are you always like that!? If you'd just left it at that, it would have been a good conversation!"

"Come on, tell me, you don't need to hide it."

"I'll tell Kin-chan, that you're a heart breaker."

"D-don't do it, Kou! I'll never hear the end of it!"

"By the way, I think it might be a little late."

"Why?"

"They're probably talking about all of them."

"Whaaaat!? Kotori, Kotori, come back here now!"

"I misjudged you, Nii-san!"

"Uwaa, wait, Kotori, it's a misunderstanding!"

The silence soon ended and they were soon part of the noisy circle of girls. Koutarou truly understood the days he's been blessed with. So he could honestly admit that he was happy now.

終章
~Epilogue~

Epilogue

The thing the haniwa had used to wake Yurika was a spicy sauce that wasn't often used, called 'Potemkin's Morning Glow.' Its spiciness wasn't just a match for Tabasco, it was the ultimate hot sauce which had urban rumours that it had killed people with shock.

"Ah, ah 'an 'inally 'eel my 'ongue a'in."

"What was that?"

"She said 'I can finally feel my tongue again.'"

Of course, the hot sauce had put Yurika in an awful state, her lips had swollen and her tongue had gone numb so she couldn't speak. Thanks to that, Yurika being able to talk wasn't strictly speaking through sound, but by Sanae listening to her voice through spiritual waves.

"Are you okay, Yurika, the performance is later."

Theia looked worriedly at Yurika, today was the second part of the play and Yurika had been given an important role, so Theia was looking at her more kindly than usual.

"I 'ought 'ah was 'oing 'o breathe 'ire buh 'ah'll manaeh 'or uh p'ay."

"That was 'I thought I was going to breathe fire, but I'll manage for the play.'"

"Yurika-sama, I brought some milk."

"I' 'ere 'awbe'y 'yrup?"

"'Is there strawberry syrup?'"

"No, ho-."

"The only red thing we have is hot sauce, ho-."

"'Ah'll 'ink i' 'ike 'is."

"'I'll drink it like this.'"

"Here you are, Yurika-sama."

Yurika took the milk from Ruth and filled her mouth with it, cooling her mouth and tongue and neutralising the remaining spiciness. The best treatment for these occasions.

"She won't be able to eat for a while…"

Koutarou watched her and understood that it wasn't the time for food for her and made a suggestion to Kiriha, who was nearby preparing food.

"Kiriha-san, could you make some sandwiches for Yurika to have later?"

"Okay, I'll make them."

"'orry 'or 'uh bo'er."

"'Sorry for the bother.'"

This was a complete accident, so Koutarou would support her as much as he could, the sandwiches were one way. Yurika had the role of the dragon that would fight against him dressed as the Blue Knight. It would be awful if a lead role couldn't act, and they couldn't use someone else now.

"Anyway, Koutarou, let's finish breakfast, we don't have much time either."

"Agreeeed!"

"Okay, we'll do that."

They'd done what they could for Yurika and began to eat their own food. This morning's meal had been picked especially for the play, it was easily digestible udon. However, udon alone would be dull, so there were several sides of things like fried egg. As far as breakfast was concerned, they were ready for war.

As they finished breakfast, Yurika finally recovered her ability to speak and started her second glass of milk.

"Sorry for making you worry."

"Yurika-chan, I hope you've learnt to properly wake up from this."

Shizuka spoke up with a wry smile, already knowing what had happened.

"It wasn't my fault today!"

"We're sorry, ho-."

"We didn't know it was sauce that killed people, ho-."

"Killed people!?"

Yurika had returned to normal and so had the atmosphere of room 106. You could somewhat say that everyone was thinking of each other. Their relationships had grown a lot in these ten months.

"Koutarou, egg."

"Sure, sure."

Sanae was happily giving orders to Koutarou. She was a little timid because Yurika couldn't eat.

"Udon this time."

"Hmm…"

Sanae was just calling out her favourite foods, now that Yurika was recovered, there was no need for restraint. But, a problem occurred.

"And finally, an octopus sausage!"

"You really like those, don't you?"

"Ehehehe~~"

The thing Sanae was most looking forward to was eating octopus shaped sausages.

"Ah!?"

"Theia!?"

"Fufufu~~n."

Theia had quickly extended her chopsticks and taken the last one. This had happened before, and immediately caused a fight, Ruth worried for an instant whether it would happen again.

"Here, go ahh."

"Huh?"

"Hm, don't you want it?"

"I do, I do! Eat it, Koutarou!"

"Aah."

"Here."

But Ruth's fears were unfounded, Theia put the food in Koutarou's mouth with a smile.

"Tasty~~~!"

"…What's that all about?"

After eating the sausage, Koutarou looked at Theia strangely.

"There's not really a reason. If you forced me… I'd say it's because I want to make the play a success. That's all."

Theia smiled, she'd taken it by sheer chance and easily gave it over to Koutarou and Sanae. She didn't have any reason to be mean to them. Rather, it being the day of the play, she should encourage them.

"I see, if you say so, I'm sure that's the case."

"O-of course, there's no other reason!"

"But thank you, Theia."

"Hmph."

The real reason was because Theia was kind, but she was shy, so they pretended not to notice.

"That aside, Sanae, I'm eating some vegetables."

"That's fine, I'll get off and you can eat all you want."

"That's not going to happen."

"K-Koutarou!? L-let me go, no, I don't want green peppeeeeerrrrrs!"

"Give up, resistance is meaningless."

"Gwaaaaahhhhh!"

Koutarou ate minced meat and green peppers cooked in sesame oil and looked over the room. Theia had the script in one hand and was slurping her noodles, Ruth was worrying over how to point out the bad manners to her. The haniwa were being fed green peppers by Kiriha. Yurika was still drinking milk. Next to her was Shizuka, drinking tea, and Sanae was crying out in his arms.

"B-bitter, Let me go, Koutarou~~!"

"Give up, I'm not letting go."

There was no sense they were enemies in the air, it was more like they were friends, gathered together for the play. Or one step further, something special.

"Koutarou, d-don't you love me!?"

"It's because I do."

"That's a lie, nooo, I don't want green peppers!"

That day, they'd perform the second part off the play. That success would probably change them, but they didn't know that now, they just were surrounded in kind and gentle time and surrendered themselves to it.

六畳間の侵略者!?

Afterword

To everyone who joined through the novels, it's been a while. To everyone who joined through the anime, it's good to meet you, I'm the author, Takehaya.

This book is a series of mini-episodes the cover how the characters' relationships change with the seasons between episodes one and twelve. In the original books, it'd be from volume one to seven. I thought it could be a review for those who read the original books and supplementary material for those who only watched the anime.

This time, I decided to pull an about face and play at the end of the book, including some extra. A scene where the characters are only organised by lines. That plan ended up becoming an experiment to see if it was possible to distinguish the characters only by their speaking style. I wrote four pages with nine characters this time.

'Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!?' has many scenes were there are many character talking in one place. This is decided in the planning stages. Individually saying who was talking each time would quickly use up all the pages. So being able to tell the characters apart from their lines and the usage of sound effects is important. I haven't explained it properly yet though, I thought I'd try it once, that's what the thing at the end of this book is. Everyone that read it, how was it? Could you properly tell who was speaking? I'll be happy if you could.

I might do something like this again, but detached from the original story like this, I think it'll be fun to read.

Now that I'm here, I thought I'd talk about the anime a little.

It was around volume five when making this into an anime came up. It's currently at sixteen volumes plus the side-story, so eighteen volumes, thirteen volumes more. The series is published every four months, so with a rough calculation, it's been about four years and four months. However, many things happened all at once and it only actually started last year. I think I kept all the readers waiting quite a bit. Or maybe a lot of people gave up on it, I'm sorry for making you wait so long.

However, those four years were good luck for me.

I planned to make this a long series from the start, but I made it so it could be ended properly at any time if it were discontinued, when I started, I prepared four endings, at three, five, seven and the original planned lengths. (Strictly speaking, the long version has several degrees too.)

I did this because I wanted to avoid the series not getting enough popularity to continue and betraying the fans that had bought it.

However, that structure made the whole work more complicated. For example, in episode one on this DVD/Blu-Ray, Koutarou meets a mysterious girl in some ruins, but in each of the four paths, her design was slightly different. In the novels it was fine to not have an illustration, but the anime needed a design. There were several things like that in the series.

However, it started around volume five, where it wasn't clear whether it would be the seven volume or long version. So if the anime had gotten the green light then, the design wouldn't have been finalised but a design would need to be chosen. I think everyone would understand that that would be a minus to everyone.

Three years passed and last year the anime development committee came to life. I think there were fifteen volumes out at that point, including the side story, and the setting and design were finalised so the anime didn't have anything to hesitate over. Thanks to that, everyone could see the anime as it was planned. Rather, I think the parts that weren't drawn in the novels or were vaguely misdirecting were clearly drawn.

That’s why I think those four years were good luck.

I want to deeply thank the editorial department who worked so hard on this series and the anime, Poco-san who is in charge of illustrations, all the companies involved, the voice actors and everyone who bought this DVD/Blu-Ray.

If luck is with us, let us meet again.

August 2014

Takehaya

Emergency Character Symposium!!

DVD Bonus Planning – Emergency Character Symposium!!

Talk theme: Can you tell the difference between characters just from their lines!?

“Now then, let’s just get started with our emergency character symposium. I, Sanae-chan am the chair!”

“Um, um, is it alright to name yourself?”

“I thought we should show who was talking first. Showing that distinction is what this conversation is about.”

“That’s true I suppose.”

“So then, sound off.”

“I’m the princess of love and courage ☆ Magical Girl Rainbow Yurika!”

“I’m Kurano Kiriha.”

“I am Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe.”

“I’m Ruth. Thank you for always taking care of me.”

“I’m Kasagi Shizuka, sorry the room’s so small.”

“I’m Sakuraba Harumi. Is it alright, even calling me here…”

“I think it is fine, I’m here too after all.”

“Name yourself, four eyes.”

“I’m Clariossa Daora Forthorthe. Geez, it’s all that false Blue Knight’s fault that I have to do this…”

“Where is Satomi Koutarou? I thought we’d finally finish this.”

“Maki-chan, name yourself.”

“Whoops, that’s right. I’m Aika Maki, the indigo magical girl that controls hearts.”

“Hello to everyone once again, I’m the unfortunate, beautiful ghost girl, Higashihongan Sanae. I thought I’d like to send off these nine this time.”

“By the way, Sanae, where are Koutarou and the haniwa?”

“They speak really differently, so it’s fine, considering the pages left.”

“That’s true, just our introductions have already taken nearly two pages.”

“What are they doing~?”

“They chickened out.”

“We took them some tea and snacks earlier and the three were complaining to someone about their treatment.”

“Well, you can tell if one of them is talking from ‘ore’ or ‘ho-‘ so there’s no helping it.”

“So Satomi Koutarou isn’t coming? Then I’m leaving.”

“N-no! Sit down please!”

“If he’s not here, then there’s no reason for me to be here. Someday I will take my vengeance.”

“It’s fine isn’t it, there aren’t that many pages left. I want to go soon too, I need to tidy the back garden.”

“No no! Everyone sit down! That’s my duty as chair.”

Emergency Character Symposium!!

“Fu… Okay, in exchange, I’d like you to finish this quickly.”

“So, Sanae-chan, what should we talk about?”

“Let’s see, let’s test how far we can go with just lines, say what you want.”

“…I deal with the choice the worst. Talking when I have lines like a play is easiest.”

“You’re reserved by nature.”

“Sanae-sama, why don’t we decide on a conversation topic?”

“Let’s do that. Then… Everyone give a comment on Koutarou.”

“Satomi-san is a bully. But he gives me food so he’s a precious person.”

“Koutarou… is my best friend, that’s what I think recently.”

“He’s an idiot. In both the good way and the bad way.”

“Your Highness, you can’t… oh no, umm, Satomi-sama is a kind person.”

“He’s my precious tenant. It’d be good for him to live here like this for a while.”

“He’s my junior in the same society. But recently he’s not just that…

“Ber- whoops, that man is an old fashioned stubborn person. I can’t follow him.”

“He’s my greatest rival. Defeating him is everything to me.”

“In my case… Koutarou is Koutarou. The only one. Recently we’ve been sleeping together.”

“So that’s everyone.”

“I wonder if the readers were able to distinguish us all.”

“It’s fiiine! I’m sure they could! In their soul!”

“…I’d really like to know the basis for that confidence.”

‹End›